MAKING JESUS KING

REV. A. B. SIMPSON

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BY

REV. A. B. SIMPSON

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INTRODUCTION.

The eye of spiritual discernment loves to trace in the story of the Old Testament the type and foreshadowing of the New. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt's bondage, looked forward to the grander story of human Redemption. The victories of Joshua prefigured the Apostolic age, and the early triumphs of Christianity. The dreadful declension under the Trojes foreshadowed the Dark Ages of Christian history. The Reformation under Samuel pointed toward the great Reformation of the sixteenth century. The reign of Saul was the counterfeit of the true kingdom, and so there is a worldly Church and ~~and~~ even a false ecclesiasticism before the manifestation of Christ and the revelation of the Bride of the Lamb. At last David comes. God's true king. And the story of his rejection, exile, and final triumph freely foreshadows the conflicts and victories that are to usher in the reign of our Lord, and "make Jesus King."

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Finally the reign of Solomon, in all his glory sets forth the great consummation, the millenial age, and the glorious reign of the King of kings, and Lord of lords. This is the lofty theme which the following chapters and discoures attempt to trace. May they prove, through the blessing of the Holy Spirit, a divine incentive to make us "of one heart to make Jesus King."

SAMUEL, THE GREAT REFORMER.

"Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth." I. Samuel iii. 9.

"And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground." I. Samuel iii. 19.

THE life of Samuel marks a transition period in the history of Israel from the time of the Judges to the kingdom of Saul and David. His was an epoch life like Abraham's, Joshua's and Luther's.

He stands out the great Reformer of his time, lifting his people out of the Dark Ages of the Old Testament and leading them into the Golden Age of David's kingdom and Israel's preeminence among the nations. More than any other character of the ages he resembled Martin Luther, the great Reformer of the Christian Dispensation, who lifted the church of God out the corruption of bondage and superstition and gave us the Reformation, the Bible, the doctrines of grace and the light and liberty of Protestantism.

Samuel also enjoyed the distinguished honor of being the founder of the school of the prophets and the first in that glorious succession of holy men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and who formed the unbroken line of truth and righteousness in the history of God's ancient people. There were three representative official classes in the Old Testament—prophets, priests and kings. The priests had many honored names. like Aaron, Phinehas and Ezekiel, but they often became corrupt and allowed the very sanctuary of God to be defiled by the abominations of heathenism. The kings were also nobly represented by such names as David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah, but how often, alas! they were disgraced by men like Saul, Ahaz, Manasseh and Jehoiakim. But the prophets formed an unbroken line of faithful witnesses and glorious examples who, amid all the declensions of the nation and the apostacies of their priests and kings, not only stood true in their testimony to the will of God, but lived out in their lives the principles of integrity and uprightness. From the days of Samuel they formed a distinct class and had a reg-

ular school of training, corresponding somewhat to our theological seminaries and training institutes, and Samuel had the preeminence of being the founder of these prophetic schools. Later in his life he went about the country as a pastor and overseer, visiting the towns and villages, holding conventions, from place to place and instructing the people in the law of God and the schools of the prophets in the principles of the kingdom.

But, above all his public ministries and even his national influence, Samuel was himself a beautiful and spotless character. In an age of almost universal corruption he lived a life of blameless piety, and at a later period, when bidding farewell to the nation as their judge, he could truly call upon them to witness to his uprightness and integrity. "Behold," he said, "I am old and gray-headed, and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am; witness against me before the Lord and before His anointed. Whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to

blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it to you. And they said, "Thou hast not defrauded us nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand."

Samuel stands with Joseph, Joshua and Daniel, one of the blameless lives of sacred history; human no doubt in his infirmities, but no fault has been recorded against him and his personal character, is the most eloquent testimony of all his history.

But we are permitted to trace this beautiful life to its source. Some characters, like Elijah's, suddenly burst upon our vision and we know them only in the public and closing chapters of their history. Some, however, are like a beautiful river that you can trace to its crystal fountain and follow through all its winding channels until, like our own Mississippi, it pours its volume to the sea and flows long after as a Gulf Stream through the mighty ocean. We are permitted to stand by Samuel's cradle and even to know something of his prophetic future before his very birth. We enter into the joys and sorrows and the believing prayers of the holy mother, who was the

real fountain, not only of his natural life, but, also, of his piety and holy power. And we walk side by side with him through his childhood and his youth until, at last, we meet him in the busy activities of his manhood and follow him until he lays down his ministry and passes to his honored rest.

I. His Times.—We do not need to go farther than his own family to understand the social condition of the age. Samuel's own mother, poor Hannah, was the victim of the curse of polygamy—ever a sign of a low condition of social morality. Then, when we turn to the priesthood, as illustrated in the family of Eli, we see a shocking exhibition of low sensuality, licentiousness and cupidity that would disgrace even the grossest heathenism. Eli himself, while a just and holy man in his own private character, was weak and inefficient as a judge and priest and utterly failed to restrain his ungodly family or exercise any just administration of public affairs. The whole nation was, therefore, in a most pitiable condition, at the mercy of its foreign oppressors and so enfeebled that at a period a few years later we find that there

was not a sword in Israel, and they had even to go to the grindstones of the Philistines in order to grind their plough coulters for the ordinary operations of husbandry. It was at such a time as this that God called Samuel to be the deliverer of his country.

We need never say that the adverse circumstances of our life forbid the possibility of living to purpose and living for God. The blacker the cloud the brighter may be the rainbow. The harder our situation the more can our life become a protest against it. The lighthouse needs the midnight darkness and the storm-beaten shore to bring out its value and its purpose; and there is no situation so trying and difficult but God can sustain us in it, and when we have learned our lesson, enable us to triumph over it. We, too, like Samuel, are called to live in degenerate times. We are approaching the closing age of the dispensation, and the apostasy and tribulation which are to precede the coming of the Lord. It is not for us to excuse ourselves by prevailing wickedness, but to make our lives a protest against it and to shine as lights in the world, holding forth

the word of truth in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, a savour of life unto life if possible, but, if not, at least a savour of death unto death.

II. His Birth.—He was the child of faith and prayer and his very name means "asked of God."

God loves to have every glorious thing born of some one's faith. Moses could not come until there was a Jochabed to believe for his deliverance and then to train him for the marvelous events of his history. Before even the Son of God could appear Mary of Bethlehem had to be taught by the Holy Ghost to believe for His birth and to lay down her womanly pride in the most costly sacrifice she could have been called to make at her Lord's command. And so Samuel is but the outcome of Hannah's piety, consecration and faith.

Back of that faith there lies a broken heart, a woman's tears, a life of bitterness, disappointment and humiliation. Poor Hannah was the second wife in a polygamous system whose fruit must ever be jealousy and sorrow. But out of her crushed heart came at last the believing

prayer that brought her victory and consolation. All other sources of comfort had failed her, and at last she went to God, and at the tabernacle in Shiloh she poured out her prayer in sobs and tears until old Eli, the priest, thought her drunk and reproved her for her conduct. But she told him her story, and he sent her away with blessing and encouragement, and God whispered to her heart that her prayer was granted and her days of mourning ended.

And she did not forget when the blessing came that it was not her's, but God's, and lovingly and faithfully she gave it back to Him from whom it came. As soon as her little son was able to be left without a mother's watchful care she took him to the tabernacle, and gave him to Eli to be brought up as a child of the sanctuary. "I have lent him to the Lord," she said, "and as long as he lives he shall be lent unto the Lord." Not for a few days or weeks did she give him up, but she gave him wholly and with a sacrifice that only a mother could understand; she consented that the little feet for whose pattering she had longed should be heard no more in her cottage, that the prattle

for whose music her lonely heart had waited a lifetime should sound no more in her ears, but that she should live on till the end alone, glad to know that he was all the Lord's and was giving back to God the blessing which he had brought to her. This is love and this is the difference between the love of earth and the love of heaven. Earthly love loves for the pleasure it can find in loving. Heavenly love loves for the blessing it can give to the loved one. Hannah knew that her sacrifice was best for Samuel, and that in giving him to God she was getting more for him than a mother's selfish fondness could ever have bestowed.

And yet there was still the sweet thought behind it all that he was hers. She was not losing him but lending him, and God counted her sacrifice a real service and some day would restore the loan with infinite and eternal additions. Oh! that every father and mother could understand the privilege of giving their child to God and getting him back some day with God's compound interest. You will give your daughter to a worthless man, but how slow you are to give her to Him who gave His life for you.

III. Samuel's Childhood.—There are some lives whose glory it is to have been saved from the depths of sin. But there is even a higher beauty in having been so fully saved that our very childhood has been kept from the blight of corruption and depravity. This was Samuel's high privilege. He was always a holy child. He never knew the defiling breath of wickedness. This may be the privilege of your child, Christian mother. God help you to protect your innocent babe from the foul breath of sin's contamination and always to shelter that trusting life under the protecting wings of God. This may be your privilege, happy Christian child, who, perchance, are reading these lines today. Oh, let God have your earliest years, and may you never know the mystery of iniquity and the memories of sin and shame which, though they may be forgiven, yet come back to defile and distress the heart.

But Samuel was not holy and good by natural birth or disposition. He was not called because he was good anyhow by temperament, but it was just as we and our children must still be saved and sanctified. It was only by the grace

of God. Samuel, like every child of Adam, had to be born from above and receive the Divine touch and the Divine grace, and be brought into fellowship with the same supernatural power that saves us all.

We have the story of Samuel's first touch of God and it gives us the keynote not only of his life, but of every holy and heavenly life. The whole story is told in a single word—Samuel became acquainted with God. God revealed Himself to Samuel and Samuel hearkened, listened, and henceforth, forever, always implicitly obeyed.

The keynote of Samuel's life and of every saintly life is "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Samuel's task was not a hard one, and yet how rarely it is repeated. He had simply to attend to God, and say and do just what He told him.

This is the difference between the earthly and the heavenly life. The one is merely human, the other is divine. The crisis moment comes in every life when God speaks to us, and we hearken to Him and begin to walk in His holy fellowship and His perfect will. The very

peculiarities of Samuel's call linger in his later life in his messages to Saul, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." All his blessings had come to him by hearkening and obeying, and all Saul's calamities had come to him because he wilfully took his own way and refused to listen to God.

At first even he made some mistakes and misunderstood the voice that spake to him so gently in his little chamber. Three times it called to him in vain, and he thought it was the old priest's message; but even when he understood not he still responded and sprang to his feet, ready instantly to obey. And so God will give us time to understand His voice and learn His will. What He asks of us is the obedient spirit, and the readiness to hear and understand. He will call again and yet again if necessary, and teach us to know all that He would have us to do. Let us listen so attentively and respond so quickly that we shall not need the stroke of His hand or the bit or bridle of His discipline to make us comprehend His will, but He can guide us with His eye and flash into our inmost being the instinctive in-

tuition of His Holy will. Oh! the sweetness and the rest, oh! the safety and the strength of the life that walks with God in this inner fellowship and knows no will but His.

But Samuel had to obey as well as hearken, and it was no easy task to go to Eli and tell him all that God had spoken against his house. It was the hard test which often came again in his later ministry as the messenger of God to sinful men. Again and again, did he have to go to those he loved and say to them the thing which nearly broke his heart. A faithful ministry cannot always say smooth things. Often must we speak the words of God where we know that they will wither and break and, perhaps, alienate the dearest friendships of our life. But Samuel obeyed so perfectly this time that he never was tempted to disobey again, and he learned the lesson well, which in later years was so often repeated in the history of Israel and the story of Saul.

IV. We have a picture of Samuel's life and work. Henceforth, "the Lord was with Samuel," we are told, "and did let none of his words fall to the ground, and all Israel knew that

Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord."

What a picture of a successful life, where every word counts and the Lord lets nothing fail or have to be undone or taken back. How many of our words fall to the ground! How vain our efforts and our prayers and how oft we have to traverse over again the paths of vanity!

How can we have an established life whose every step is fixed in God and led in the way everlasting? Only by doing as Samuel did, ever hearkening to God and speaking and acting only and always in Him. Then we shall not need to advertise ourselves. Men will find us out. Sad and empty lives will come to us for help, and our work will be its own witness that God is with us. God help us to live such lives.

We, too, are in an epoch age. God help us to be epoch men—men for the times on which the end of the age has come. Samuel was called to act in the beginning of the Hebrew history. We are permitted to see the close of our dispensation. Never before did the world

so need the highest types of men and the noblest, truest kinds of ministry—lives that understand God, souls that hearken, ears sensitive to His lightest whisper and wills of adamant to obey implicitly His every word. These are the men that God is looking for to mould the history of the world's last generation, and to usher in the kingdom of David's greater Son as much as He needed a Samuel in the darkest days of Old Testament history and for the inauguration of David's reign.

THE REFORMATION UNDER SAMUEL.

"And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel saying, if ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashteroth from among you and prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve Him only: and He will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines." I. Samuel vii. 3.

WE have looked at the great Reformer, let us now look at the Reformation.

I. It began in the complete failure of the people themselves and the demonstration of their utter inability to lift themselves out of their helpless condition. God has to let us come to the end of ourselves before He can interpose for our deliverance. A mother stood on the deck of a ship, hardly restrained from throwing herself into the sea to save her drowning boy, while men stood by and waited as he sank again and again. At last, as he rose for the third time, a brave seaman leaped in, and caught the sinking lad and held him safely while both were drawn to the deck. "Why didn't you save him sooner?" cried the frantic

mother, as her boy slowly came back to consciousness. "Because," said the sailor, "I had to wait until his strength was gone, or he would have drowned both himself and me." And so God has to wait until our strength is gone before He can save or sanctify or heal us.

This was Israel's state when Samuel came to the front as the leader of the new reformation. Politically, the country was under the power of the Philistines. Morally and socially the people were corrupt, and the fearful example of Hophni and Phineas, the very priests of God who turned the sanctuary at Shiloh and the very services of Jehovah's worship into an orgy of license, could not fail to have a fatal influence upon the manners and the morals of all the people. Even Eli himself, who was still recognized as the ecclesiastical and judicial head of the nation, while honest and sincere in his purpose, was a helpless tool in the hands of his family. And so the very fountains of justice and religion were utterly corrupted and all that was lacking was the crisis hour when this system of iniquity should fall to pieces by its own weight, as it really did at last. The critical

moment came when the Philistines once more invaded the land, and in a moment of presumptuous despair the desperate leaders of Israel's forlorn hope brought out the ark of Jehovah. The Philistines realized at once their danger and their opportunity. They were fighting now not only Israel, but Israel's God, and so with redoubled valour the captains roused the host to do their best, and by one victorious blow not only to crush their enemies but to secure for themselves the supernatural secret of their victorious power.

As old Eli sat by the tabernacle court at Shiloh that eventide a cloud of dust appeared upon the distant horizon, and a swift runner rapidly dashed along until he stood breathless before the aged judge. As he rushed along, the people had already caught from his manner and his looks the fearful tidings, and a great cry arose throughout the city. Eli heard the tumult and called the messenger to his side. The aged patriarch of ninety-eight was too blind to see his form, and could but dimly hear his words; but he eagerly asked him for tidings from the field, and as those fearful words fell

upon his ear, "Israel is fled, there is a great slaughter among the people, thy two sons—Hophni and Phineas—are dead and the ark of God is taken," that last word broke the old man's heart, and he sank back in a swoon and fell heavily to the ground, and as they picked him up his neck was broken and his life was gone. Among the tragedies of that terrible day was the dying anguish of the wife of Phineas and the significant name she left with her parting sigh of agony to the poor little orphan child which came that moment into life as the memorial of his country's shame, "Ichabod, "the glory is departed." Yes, it was the deepest, darkest hour of the nation's woe, but it was the darkness just before the dawn and deliverance was near.

II. The next stage in the preparation of the coming Reformation was the revelation and vindication of God as Himself the nation's hope. The one great design of Israel's history as a nation was to be the witness and revealer of God, and all the supernatural manifestations of their glorious past were intended not to show the greatness of their leaders, but the glory and

all-sufficiency of their Divine Lord and Leader. Sometimes, therefore, God had to let the human instruments utterly fail that He Himself might be the more gloriously vindicated in His own all-sufficiency and power.

And so we find in the later history of the nation that there came a time when the kings and the prophets and priests of Judah and Israel completely failed to glorify Jehovah among the nations or accomplish His purpose for the world, and yet this became the most illustrious day of His own manifestation. He had to let the very kingdom of Judah and Israel pass away in ignominious defeat, and even the temple itself become a heap of smouldering ashes before the victorious power of Nebuchadnezzar; and yet, in that very hour, He called four humble Hebrew youths in Babylon to stand for Him amid the furnace of fire and the lion's den, and so to vindicate his own glory and supremacy that in the hour of his pride Nebuchadnezzar, the mightiest king and conqueror of the earth, was compelled to acknowledge that Jehovah was the only true God, and to issue a decree calling upon his subjects to

worship the God of Daniel as the true God and the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe. And a little later he compelled Cyrus, Artexerxes and even Xerxes, the proud despots of Persia, to recognize His supremacy to protect His people and even to send back the captives from Babylon to rebuild the city and the temple at Jerusalem.

And so here we find in this period of Israel's history that while the nation failed and the priesthood failed and the very ark of God seemed to fail, God Himself became the more gloriously vindicated even in the midst of His enemies. No sooner had the ark of God been taken by the Philistines than a long train of desolation followed in its path wherever it went. They set it up in the temple of Dagon among their gods, and in the morning Dagon was fallen on his face before the ark of God. They set him up again, and the next morning he was not only fallen down, but shattered to pieces before the awful presence of the God of the ark. The most humiliating and distressing plagues began to fall upon the people and they begged that it should be sent away from Ashdod, but no sooner

had they taken it to Gath than they begged that it be removed. And so they took it to Ekron, but the people of Ekron protested, saying "They have brought the ark of the God of Israel to us to slay us and our people." And so at last they called a council and determined to send it back to Israel once more. So, preparing a costly present and choosing two milch kine, they put it on a cart and committed it to the God whom it represented in some superstitious way to their terrified minds. But it needed no human hand to guide that holy symbol of Jehovah's presence. Contrary to their own instincts, those Hebrew kine went steadily forward at a Divine command which they could neither understand nor disobey, lowing as they went, because their hearts carried them backward to their calves; yet on they went at the bidding of a power that drove them in the opposite direction until they reached Bethshemesh, where the Levites met the sacred ark and took the cattle that bore it and offered them up in sacrifice unto the Lord and presented the costly offerings before the Lord. Thus God showed that He could vindicate His own glory and lead

His own way without the help or wisdom of man.

And even a more solemn lesson still had to be learned, for as the men of Bethshemesh presumed to approach the holy symbol of the presence of God with forbidden familiarity they were smitten with death and, as nearly as we can understand from the doubtful readings of the passage (I. Sam. vi. 19), seventy men (not fifty thousand, as the Revised Version states) perished for their presumption.

This is the lesson that we all need to learn before we are prepared to truly represent God, that God does not need us or our strength, but that we need to understand Him and know that He is all-sufficient for His own work, and that what He requires of us is that we know Him, bear witness to Him and truly represent Him. He is able to take care of His own cause if we only give Him right of way. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

The best way to glorify God is to hold Him up to men and He will glorify Himself. As we go forth to meet the tests and conflicts of these last days we need to understand our God,

and to know that One is in our midst and on our side who, standing between heaven and earth has already said, "All power is given unto Me both in heaven and earth, and, lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." We have plenty of people today who know the culture and wisdom of the ages and even the theology of the Bible, but what we want are people that know their God and can stand alone and trust Him in the hour of trial, in the face of difficulties, in the midst of enemies, in the lands of the heathen and in situations where there is no hope or help but God and God alone.

III. The next step in Israel's Reformation was national repentance and the turning of the people with their whole heart from all idolatry and sin unto the Lord. And so Samuel calls them together at Mizpah to a great day of national humiliation, and addresses to them the language of our text, which is the watchword of every true reformation and revival. The essential condition of God's acceptance and blessing always must be deep sincerity; penitence and absolute rightness with God. No matter how long or how far you may have wandered,

no matter how great your sin, or how deep your sinfulness, the honest, earnest heart will always and instantly find the heart of God. If you have not found Him it is because there is some reservation, some insincerity, some idol to which you cling, some disingenuousness of heart or cherished crookedness of life. God has fixed the instant when every soul will find Him, and that is "when ye search for Me with all your heart."

And so they came together, not only with fasting and with the symbolical pouring out of the waters of cleansing before the Lord, but the best of all is that "Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpah." It is this judging of ourselves that puts us right with God. It is not emotional feeling nor fountains of tears; but simply calling things by their right names and putting them in their true places. Therefore the promise is, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He does not say anything about great sorrow or deep feeling, but simple straightforward confessing. What He wants is to have us see things aright,

diagnose the disease, recognize the fault, and then we shall be saved from future deception and disobedience. This is the emphatic meaning of that remarkable passage in I. Cor. xi. 31: "If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged." That is, if we would discern ourselves and put everything in its right place in our life we should not need God's heavier blow to wake us out of our deceptions and hold us back from evil.

IV. The next stage in Israel's Reformation was the precious atoning blood. How beautifully that sacrificial scene is described: "And Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered it as burnt offering wholly unto the Lord. And Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel and the Lord heard him." This was the difference between the present reformation and many of those that had gone before. There was at this time a thorough recognition of the atoning blood. Without this there can be no radical and lasting change in the life of an individual or people. The disposition to ignore the sacrificial meaning of Christ's death and to reduce His vicarious offering to a mere object lesson is the most

alarming condition of our Christian life and the real secret of the declension of practical righteousness and holiness.

The deepest meaning of the blood, too, many of us fail to understand. It means not cleansing, but crucifixion; not blotting out, but burying. It is not merely that the blood wipes out the sin, but it wipes out the sinner, too. The real significance of the death of Christ is that the man who committed the sin is judged, condemned and crucified with Christ, that he is not the same man that lives now, that he has been repudiated and forever put aside, and that a new man born out of Christ and descending out of heaven, has come in His place so truly that we can say in the literal language of the great apostle, "I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, but Christ liveth in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."

This is the reason men hate the cross, because it is not only Christ's cross, but it is bound to be their cross, too. It means not only a dead Saviour, but a dead sinner. But this is the

only way that the sin can ever cease and the cleansing ever be permanent and complete.

V. Next comes the test of faith and the attack of the foe. Just as the deliverance is about to come, the enemy musters in double force, and all their fears seem about to be realized. How emphatic is the time of this attack. "As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel," and the trembling people stood unarmed, defenceless and dismayed. "Cease not," they cried to Samuel, "to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines." And as that smoking sacrifice ascended silently to the heavens, hark! along the sky there burst the artillery of heaven, and a terrific thunder storm poured down upon the embattled foe, doubtless with quivering lightning stroke and mighty hailstones, as in the day of Gideon's battle, and the enemy fled in confusion, pursued by their triumphant foes until they were scattered and dispersed. So signal was the victory that we are told in the next verse "they came no more into the coast of Israel, and the hand of the Lord

was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel, and the cities which the Philistines took were restored unto Israel from Ekron even unto Gath, and the coast thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines." The victory was complete and permanent, and the Reformation had become a Restoration.

VI. The last chapter was a doxology of praise. "Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." This is ever the consummation of penitence and believing prayer. The sorrow is turned into joy and the prayer is translated into praise. This is the true way to show that we really do believe God. Not until we cease our pleading and begin to thank Him that the blessing is given shall we really have cause for thanksgiving. In the city of Salvation all the gates are Praise, and the reason many fail to enter in is because they try to creep through the tunnels rather than enter through the open gates of thankfulness and praise. This is the secret of victory forevermore, to take what He gives and thank Him for it in advance.

This is also the secret of defeat and failure, a spirit of gloom, depression, moroseness and murmuring. The moment you begin to grumble God will give you something to grumble for, and the moment you begin to praise He will give you cause for love and praise. The dreary pathway that missed the Land of Promise, and for forty years trod the lonely desert all began in the murmuring at Taberah (Num. xi. 1), and, on the other hand, the glorious *Renaissance* which led through Samuel's reformation to David's throne and Solomon's glory, all began in the stone of Ebenezer, and the praise of a trustful, thankful people. Let us, beloved, set up today over against every place of failure, over against every sorrow, yea, over against every sin as we cover it with the cleansing blood, not a banner merely, nor even a song, but a stone of Ebenezer, and write upon it, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us."

SAUL, OR SELF-LIFE LEADING TO DESTRUCTION.

THE place of Saul in Old Testament history is significant, and we believe, typical of great spiritual truths. It is conceded that Israel's redemption from Egypt foreshadowed human redemption through the cross of Calvary. It is beyond question that the triumph of Joshua and the conquest of Canaan pointed forward to the Pentecostal baptism and blessing of the Apostolic church and the deeper rest into which the Holy Ghost brings the individual Christian.

We have already seen that the dark period of declension recorded in the book of Judges and the earlier chapters of Samuel were typical of the dark ages of Christianity, and we have just seen that the Reformation under Samuel was strongly parallel to our Protestant Reformation and the revival of the church of Christ from the bondage of mediaeval darkness and

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superstition. A little farther on we shall find that the kingdom of David and Solomon was the type of Christ's Millennial throne.

But what was the meaning of the strange parenthesis of Saul's life that came before the kingdom of David and Saul? Alas! it is the counterfeit kingdom which Satan is seeking to set up on the throne of human selfishness and worldly pride, instead of the true kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of which alas! we have too many evidences in the compromising and worldly ecclesiasticism of our day, and in the Laodicean picture which the Apocalypse has given of the church that is to be rejected at the coming of the Lord.

But while this is the dispensational meaning of Saul's life, it has a still more solemn personal application for every individual Christian. It is God's fearful object lesson of the power and the peril of the self-life and the need of its utter crucifixion before we can enter into the true kingdom of spiritual victory and power.

I. We see the spirit of self in the very motive that prompted the kingdom of Saul. Samuel

perfectly understood it as a virtual rejection of God as the supreme King of Israel and a real vain-glorious desire to be independent of divine control and to be like the surrounding nations of the world. "Make us a king," they said, "to judge us like all the nations." No wonder that Samuel was deeply displeased and prayed unto the Lord, but God answered him: "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they have said unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them."

Nevertheless, Samuel still protested and solemnly warned them of the burdens and the exactions which their king would claim from them and the trouble they were bringing upon themselves, adding: "Ye shall cry out on that day because of your king, which ye have chosen, and the Lord will not hear you in that day." But it was no use. They had set their heart upon their king and they answered: "We will have a king over us, that we may also be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles." This is the spirit of the prodigal, saying,

"Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." It is the desire of independence which is the very root of human sin, and it is the spirit of conformity to the world in the church today, and we are conscious of it in our own natural hearts as that big, self-asserting and dominant "I" which makes a man a god unto himself and refuses to surrender his will to Christ, or yield the direction of his life to the will of God and the government of the Holy Ghost.

Therefore, the very first step in the new life must ever be surrender; and the essential condition of the baptism of the Holy Ghost is to yield the very last point to God, and even the things which may in themselves be harmless must be first surrendered if for no other reason than to prove that our will is wholly laid down, and that God is all in all.

II. We see the spirit of self in the very character of Saul, and the qualifications which made him the choice and the idol of the people. Saul was the very embodiment of the human. He represented all that was most strong, chivalrous, attractive and promising in human

nature. He was of splendid physique, a head taller than all the people, a magnificent specimen of physical manhood, and "every inch a king."

He possessed the intellectual, moral and social qualities that constitute a great public leader. He was brave, heroic, enthusiastic and generous, and the early years of his reign are adorned with some stirring examples of heroic deeds. He was all that the human heart would choose. He represented the best possibilities of human nature, and as the people looked at his splendid figure they shouted again and again that patriotic cry which has so often re-echoed since, and which has so seldom been fulfilled as a prayer to heaven, "God save the king."

God had to let this man stand before the ages to show that man at his best is only man and the human self-sufficiency must end in failure and desperate sorrow. This is the lesson that God is trying to teach His children still. How few of them have found it out so fully that they can say, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." The sentence

of death has passed upon the flesh, and there is but one thing we can do with it—to nail it to the cross of Jesus Christ, to reckon it dead, and to keep it forever in His bottomless grave.

III. The spirit of self in Saul was combined with much that was good and attractive, both naturally and spiritually. Naturally, we have seen that he was not only a man of princely bearing, but of many noble and heroic qualities. He had also a most beautiful family, and Jonathan, his son, is the most attractive figure in the long gallery of Bible characters.

When Saul came to Samuel and first was called to the kingdom, he seemed to have many elements of sterling virtue and genuine humility. Like a dutiful son, he went to search for his father's asses, and then he went to the prophet Samuel to ask counsel about finding them. When he came to Samuel and was told his extraordinary message and anointed to be king, there was no unbecoming self-consciousness about him. He kept his secret with discretion and modesty, and even in telling his uncle about the words of Samuel he said nothing to him about the greater message concern-

ing the kingdom. When he left the presence of Samuel he did just what he was told, and when he met the company of prophets he joined them and received a real baptism of the Spirit like them and prophesied among them with genuine religious enthusiasm. And even when they sought for him to bring him out before the people and announce to him his choice as the national ruler, they could not find him, for he was hiding among the stuff and he seemed a very paragon of modesty and unobtrusiveness. And yet this was the very man who let the dark and dreadful shadow of himself blight his own life and ruin his kingdom and his family. Oh, how self-deceptive is the human spirit! Oh, how pride itself will hide away in the very guise of deepest humility! In speaking of his earlier life the prophet Samuel pays a tribute to his former humility "When thou wast little in thine own sight," he says, "wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?" We cannot doubt that Samuel's language is perfectly sincere, and that he is giving Saul credit for at least a measure of genuine humility. What

then was the defect? May it have been this? It is one thing to be little in our own eyes, it is another thing to be out of our own sight altogether. True humility is not thinking meanly of ourselves, it is not thinking of ourselves at all. What we need is not so much self denial as self-crucifixion and utter self-forgetfulness. The perfect child is just as unconscious in the highest place as in the lowest, and the true spirit of Christ in us recognizes ourselves as no longer ourselves, but so one with the Lord Jesus that we can truly say: "Not I, but Christ who liveth in me." "By the grace of God I am what I am."

But what are we to learn from this combination of so many excellencies in one life and its ultimate failure and ruin? Alas, we are to learn that Satan's choicest wile is to mingle the good with the evil and to cover his poison as a sugar-coated pill, because he knows we would never take it in its unmixed and undiluted evil. Satan's choicest agents are those that are attractive and naturally lovely. Esau was a more winning man naturally than Jacob; but Esau was lost and Jacob was chosen. You

may be beautiful, you may be wise, you may be cultured, you may be moral, you may be useful, you may be noble and generous, and yet, withal, you may be living for yourself and, at last, like Saul, self-destroyed. Satan only wants a mortgage on you, and he is content to take a mortgage for a thousand dollars if he cannot get one for a hundred thousand. He can wait for the day of foreclosure. All he wants is to have his hand in it. It is the mixed lives that are doing the mischief.

"Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty."

IV. The first test came to Saul in an hour of severe trial when, beleaguered by his enemies and deserted by almost all his soldiers, he seemed to be facing destruction. Waiting seven days for Samuel to come and begin the battle by the usual sacrificial offering, Saul at last grew discouraged and impatient, and then he presumed to take upon himself the priestly functions which belonged only to Samuel, and

to offer up the sacrifice without waiting for the prophet. As he was offering it, Samuel came and instantly pronounced upon Saul the terrible sentence: "Thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, as He commanded thee; for now would the Lord thy God have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever, but now shall thy kingdom not continue. The Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee."

Many a life succeeds while all is succesful, but in the hour of trial self always shows itself. Saul was a splendid king until the first great trial met him, and then he became discouraged, distrustful, self-asserting and presumptuous, and dared to take in his own hands the things that belonged only to God. He usurped the throne of God Himself and showed his true nature. He was a man of his own heart and not of God's heart, and henceforth God sought Him a man after God's heart who should do God's will and not his own, and thus be a

true representative of Israel's true King. As soon as Saul had shown himself in his real character, God immediately delivered the people out of their peril by two feeble men—Jonathan and his armor-bearer—that He might show to Saul how little He needed his strength or any human strength or wisdom, and how all-sufficient God was to those who only trusted Him. Even this victory Saul almost wrecked by his interference and wilfulness, and it became apparent by his own folly that he could not be trusted with God's work, and that his persistent self-will would always hinder the will and the work of God. Not instantly did the crisis come. Slowly did God let this spirit of self work out into its full development; but it was evident from this hour that Saul's life must fail, and that Samuel's prophecy was, alas, true.

V. God gave another opportunity and a second test. He sent Saul on an important expedition to destroy Amalek, the race of Esau that had tried to hinder Israel in their passage through the wilderness. There is a deep spiritual meaning back of this story; for Amalek was a type of the flesh; and the destruction of

Amalek was just an illustration of the very principle which Saul's life so strongly emphasizes, and Saul's failure to destroy Amalek is, therefore, the more significant because it shows how deeply rooted the self-principle was in his own soul. The man who spared Agag was the man who spared the principle of self in his own heart; and the two pictures blend with an awful significance for every one of us.

Saul successfully accomplished the invasion and returned victorious. He even seems to have been so possessed with the spirit of self-complacency that he failed to realize his own true character until Samuel uttered his fearful words of doom. "Yea, I have obeyed the commandment," he cried with perfect assurance, and when the awful words of the prophet answered back: "Obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He also hath rejected thee from being king," it is doubtful if even then Saul fully realized the nature of his sin, so subtle and self-deceiving is the spirit of self that even then all he seemed to feel was the fear of being humi-

liated before the people. And he begged the petty bauble of Samuel's public recognition and honor, and this little bit of vain glory was the solace and the comfort of his wretched soul in the hour when the sentence of death and ruin was thundering in his ears. What a spectacle of self-complacency and self-deception; the snare of a religious motive, keeping the spoil to sacrifice to the Lord! We see the fear of man, the unwillingness of this weak man to displease the people when they begged him to save the precious booty of Amalek.

But one word above all others seems to crystallize the very element of this stupendous folly. It is the word "compromise." Saul obeyed, but with a compromise. Saul did much good, but he compromised with evil. God's commandments are uncompromising, inexorable, unqualified, and our obedience must be inflexible, absolute and complete. The faintest reservation is really the very soul of disobedience. The failure even to hearken to the full meaning of God indicates a spirit of unwilling obedience.

Saul stands before us in this picture the in-

carnation of self-will and, therefore, the enemy of God, nay, the rival of God upon His very throne. Could there be any other issue? "Thou hast rejected the work of the Lord, the Lord hath rejected thee from being king."

VI. Not immediately did the judgment culminate. Slowly, still the coil of self unwinds until all its hidden sinuosities have been revealed. Saul did much work after this, much good work, fought many battles, fought them well, reigned over Israel, and established a powerful kingdom, but it was Saul's kingdom and not God's. All the remaining years were years of self-activity and self-vindication. For nine years he pursued David, his rival, with ferocious hate. The Spirit of God left him, and an evil spirit, by God's permission, possessed him; and as the years went on, the beginning and the end of his existence was Saul and not Jehovah. It was self incarnate with all its miserable works and fruits.

VII. At last the culmination came. Eaten out by the canker of self, his heart became the dwelling place of Satan. The devil took entire possession of him, and in one dreadful hour

he gave himself up to spiritualism and, rejected of the Lord, sought the counsel of necromancers, whom he had formerly persecuted and banished from his kingdom. It was the last fatal step. Self had driven God from the throne, and now it gave it to Satan and the next chapter of self-life was self-destruction.

Trembling and prostrated by the fearful vision which his own presumption had brought up from the depths of Hades, Saul dashed with reckless despair into the last battle of his life, and the next day the tragedy was complete—the flower of Israel's youth was lying on the slopes of Gilboa—the army of Saul was annihilated—the Philistines were victorious on every side—the kingdom which Saul had built up for a quarter of a century for himself was broken to pieces and scattered to the winds—Saul's sons were lying dead on the mountain sides, and Saul himself a wretched suicide, had gone to his own fearful place. The scorpion, self, had stung others, and now, at last, it stung itself to death. The revelation of human selfishness was complete, and before the sad and

fearful spectacle we may well stand in awe and humbly, earnestly and fervently pray:

Oh, to be saved from myself, dear Lord,
Oh, to be lost in Thee!
Oh, that it might be no more I,
But Christ that lives in me.

JONATHAN, OR THE FRIEND THAT STICKETH CLOSER THAN A BROTHER.

"There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Prov. xviii. 24.

GOD has made the human heart to be an alphabet of higher things. The material world was made to be a type of the higher spiritual realm, and all the objects of nature are but living characters by which God has written His name upon His works. God has given us the filial heart that we might understand the love we ought to feel to our Father in heaven. He has made the love of father, mother and brother that we might in some measure realize God's Divine paternity—the Holy Spirit's motherhood and the heart of that "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother." The best of human friendships is but a bit of broken glass reflecting something higher in the heavens above us; and as in the little fragment of a shattered mirror you can see the sun reflected from above,

so in our poor, imperfect hearts and our broken earthly ties we have a revelation of the heart of God.

The story of Jonathan stands out in vivid relief against the dark background of his father's life, and is one of the finest examples of human character and holy friendship. Beautiful in itself and reflecting the highest nobility in the subject himself, it is a still higher object lesson of Divine love, and unfolds, as no other sacred picture, the friendship of Christ, the "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother." There are three aspects in which we may look at this beautiful picture:

I. As an example of high character and heroic faith. True love must rest on a basis deeper and stronger than mere sentiment or passion. The pretty face, the charm of manner, the thousand little things which become like fetiches to attract the fancy or even the idolatry of the superficial and the selfish world, will soon be forgotten and instead of the rose will be the thorn of bitter disappointment and hopeless heartbreak. The only true foundation of a lasting friendship is high and noble char-

acter. Love is the magnetic attraction of two kindred lives to each other, meeting like two drops of water because they are akin. Respect and esteem must ever lie back of affection, and the more intimately we know each other the more perfectly ought we to be able to respect each other's character or else our love must become one-sided and transient.

Jonathan and David were both lofty natures, which recognized in each other the nobility of highest manhood, and their souls were knit together by an esteem that was as perfect as their affection was intense. Jonathan well deserved the regard of his friend. He was a born hero and his heroism was not a romantic sentiment, but a deep and settled principle of faith in God.

One startling example shines out, and stands no doubt for many an unrecorded act behind. The Philistines had gathered in overwhelming force, and the little army of Saul was wearing away until only about six hundred remained around the royal standard. In the Philistine host there were 6,000 cavalry, 30,000 chariots of iron and hundreds of thousands of infantry, a mighty and apparently irresistible foe.

Saul had waited for Samuel to come and inaugurate the campaign by the sacrificial rites, and then despairing of his arrival had rashly presumed to assume the priestly functions and offer the sacrifice himself. The result was the Divine displeasure, the rebuke of Samuel and the withdrawal of Divine favor.

It was the darkest hour that could possibly have come to the nation and the cause. But dark hours are always the hours when character reveals its sterling qualities. The stars shine out at night as they cannot in the day, and this was the hour when Jonathan's true character was made plain.

Accompanied by his solitary armor-bearer, he looked across the valley to the Philistines' stronghold in the clefts of the naked rocks, and he suggested to his armor-bearer that they should go up against them, "for," he added, in the language of true faith, "it may be that the Lord will work for us, for there is no restraint with the Lord to work by many or by few." He was not looking at numbers, but at God. Happily, he had in his armor-bearer a kindred spirit. There were two heroes that day, and it

is just as noble to help a noble nature and to stand out of sight but in full accord as it is to lead the van in some glorious advance. Noble natures find out noble natures, and it is a glorious thing to have on our side in the hour of trial and in the hour of lofty daring some kindred heart to say to us, "Do all that is in thine heart; behold I am with thee according to thine heart."

But we see in Jonathan not only a daring adventurer, but also a wise and prudent leader who has learned not only to initiate a great movement but to carry it through in wise caution and unceasing dependence upon the strong arm of God. Many a movement is well begun but disastrously ended because we let human impulse take the place of humble faith, and holding the bit in our own teeth we dash ahead of God and sometimes are hurled headlong over the precipice of presumption.

Jonathan waited for God to make every step plain, and so they agreed that God should give them a further sign whether they were to make the advance as proposed. The sign was that the Philistine garrison was to invite them up

for a parley on that rocky height. That was all he wanted, and now bold impulse and humble dependence upon God were changed into instant and effectual action, and they quickly scaled the height and threw themselves upon their unsuspecting enemies until twenty had fallen at their feet.

Suddenly a panic seized the host, and God seconded the bold attack by a startling earthquake, which shook the ground, and a dreadful fear fell upon the foe, so that, thinking there was some mighty host behind them, they turned and fled, pressing one another down as they were swept away before the avalanche, until Saul's watchmen saw from the distant heights of Gibeah that host of myriad men in full retreat. Then Saul and his soldiers took up the pursuit and, once again, his presumption and folly and wilfulness almost ruined the victory that God had wrought, and, but for the intervention of the people, who rescued Jonathan out of his hands, the noble hero, who had been the instrument of all the blessing of that day, would have been the victim of his father's wilfulness and haste. This illustration is suf-

ficient to show us the background of strength in the character of Jonathan and the qualities which, had he lived and reigned, would have made him, doubtless, as illustrious as the friend for whose sake he gave up his opportunities and honors and even sacrificed his life at last.

Beloved, let it be your aim and mine, not so much to win the love of others as to be worthy of it; not so much to be esteemed as to be deserving of esteem; not so much to bind to ourselves the hearts of men as to stand so high and glorious that we shall draw them to us as the magnet draws the steel. It is better to be than to seem; and true character, like precious gems, cannot be always undiscovered, but will find its place and reach its full appreciation and glorious coronation.

And you who are setting your affections on all the capricious fancies of your mind and becoming attached to those you lightly meet, oh, remember that you are weaving for yourselves a future of intolerable bondage and a shroud of agony and death. You are letting your hearts become bound by a spell that even you cannot break, to persons and things that will drag you

down and make your life a disappointment if not a disaster. Remember that it is a sign of a noble character to love the noble. Do not link your lives with the unholy and the earthly, but let your associations be regulated by holy principle and your friendships fastened to the skies.

II. We see the picture of a holy friendship. The attachment of David and Jonathan is spoken of in the highest terms. "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." And in the pledge of his affection he made a covenant with his friend and stripped himself of his princely robe, and even of his personal and inner garments, bearing, no doubt, the monogram of his royal name, and even the very sword, which was to a warrior the badge of his highest honor, and his bow and his very girdle, which was the most sacred article of personal apparel in an Oriental wardrobe, for it was his purse and the repository of all his secrets and sacred treasures—all these Jonathan gave to David as the expression of his unbounded and unreserved oneness with the friend of his inmost heart.

Speaking of his affection afterwards, David uses in his exquisite dirge over his fallen friend this extreme and almost extravagant language, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan, very pleasant hast thou been unto me, thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." Perhaps there is no human affection so intense as a pure woman's whole-hearted love when she yields her whole being to the one she utterly trusts. But even this was surpassed by the noble and wonderful devotion of this lofty heart.

Well did Jonathan prove it. Not only did he give these pledges of his confidence to his friend in the first emotion of his early love, but he stood true to him through all the perils of the succeeding years. There is no higher proof of love than loyalty to a friend in the midst of foes.

A noble nature cannot be disloyal. A double-faced friend is worse than an enemy. You may always distrust a traitor. The man that can receive the confidence and kindness of another and then go and speak against him or let others speak against him, is not only a false friend but

a worthless character in every other relation of life.

You may safely distrust the man or woman that comes to you with evil tales of a former friend. Some day they will be the bearer of worse tales respecting you. Such people deserve to be rebuked wherever we find them, and taught the lesson of their ignominy and meanness.

Jonathan was no such friend. When he found his father's jealousy against David becoming dangerous he tried to check it, and for a while succeeded in overcoming it and bringing about a reconciliation. But as time wore on and that father's bitterness grew more malignant, and Jonathan knew that nothing would satisfy it but David's life, he even risked his life to vindicate his friend. And, then, when he found it was hopeless to make a further attempt, he was true enough to sacrifice his own pleasure in David's companionship and warn him that he must flee. And so at last the two friends parted, probably to meet no more, parted with many an embrace and many a tear, but parted bravely and went their ways, the one

to wait for his kingdom and the other to lay down his life and know that he was yielding his kingly prospects, his very crown, to the friend he loved.

It was to Jonathan's interest even more than Saul's that David should die, because his survival meant that he should succeed to the throne of Saul, and Jonathan knew this and, knowing it, accepted it, acquiesced in it, rejoiced in it, and gladly gave place to the one he loved, and at last laid down his very life, glad, perhaps, to know that the way was made clear for David's future throne.

The deepest principle of true friendship and, indeed, the greatest thing in the universe, is unselfish love. Satan delights to pervert the best things, and the way he perverts love is by inverting it and turning it into selfishness. The saddest thing in the world is that which ought to be the noblest but is the meanest, when even love itself becomes corrupted into its own opposite by terminating on itself. Whenever we love because of the pleasure it ministers to us we cease to love and it becomes self-love. True love always looks outward to its object and finds

its pleasure in the pleasure it communicates and the blessing it gives. Love inverted and perverted becomes lust, which is the vilest blot and curse of human character and human history.

Beloved, would you know the secret of a holy friendship and a happy love? Learn to forget yourself, and live for others and to let your fondest affections and friendships minister blessing to those you love, and the reflex action, without your seeking it, will be your own highest happiness.

God is love in this sublime sense. His constant occupation is to bless and, therefore, God is blessed, too, and His bosom is the source and the sum of all true joy.

III. A type of the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. The friendship of David and Jonathan leads us up to the higher love of the Lord Jesus Christ for us, and the Divine friendship which He permits us to claim with Him. If Jonathan's love was wonderful, passing the love of women, Christ's love is more wonderful, surpassing all human friendship and transcending all examples and tests of love.

Jonathan's heart was knit unto David and he loved him as his own soul, but Christ is not only knit unto us, but He is one with us. He has partaken of our very nature, our blood flows through His veins and He has loved us better than His own soul, for He poured out His soul unto death and laid down His life without a reservation, because He loved us and gave Himself for us.

Jonathan gave David his outer robe, and even his inner garments, but Christ has given to us the robes of His glory and His kingly dignity, and the very raiment of His righteousness and His personal character and life.

Jonathan gave to David his sword, the very symbol of his power, and Christ has armed us with His own strength and given to us His own victory.

Jonathan gave David his bow as well as his sword, and Christ has not only armed us for the foes that are immediately around us, but He has given to us the weapons by which we can reach the very heights of heaven and the uttermost parts of the earth. By the bow of faith and the arrows of prayer we can reach

the omnipotence of God and our influence can extend to the farthest reaches and the lowest depths of human sin and sorrow.

And Jonathan gave to David his girdle. In one sense the girdle binds all the raiment together, and might well represent the whole person and apparel. Christ gives us everything He has and is. The girdle was especially the symbol of strength for service. The girded soldier was ready for battle, the girded servant ready for work. Christ girds us with His own power and enables us for the service which He claims from us.

And if the girdle signifies the more sacred treasures of the Oriental, containing his wallet, papers, money, jewels and the things he most prized, so Christ has given to us also the very treasures of His love and the very secrets of His confidence. He has held nothing back from us, but He takes us into His inmost heart and says to us, "Henceforth I call you not servants; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you."

Most touching of all, however, is the fact

that Christ, like Jonathan, has died for us that we might inherit His very throne and enjoy the rich bequests of His will. He has given us the New Testament as His last will, bequeathing to us our glorious inheritance, and He has risen again to secure it to us from every adversary or failure.

Oh, what a wonderful place
  Jesus has given to me!
Saved by His glorious grace
  I may be even as He.
All that He has shall be mine;
  All that He is I shall be,
Robed in His glory Divine
  I shall be even as He.

AGAG, OR THE SUBTLETIES OF THE SELF-LIFE.

"And Samuel said, Bring ye hither to me Agag, the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the Lord at Gilgal." I. Sam. xv. 32, 33.

WE have already referred to this passage as an illustration of the character of Saul. There is still a deeper type of the subtleties of the self-life in the picture of Agag which the Holy Ghost has framed into the narrative of this solemn history. Saul and Agag both teach the same great lesson and warning, namely, the peril of a self-centered life, but they teach it in somewhat different ways, and the story of Agag is worthy of our prayerful and heart-searching consideration.

I. His Race. He belonged to the race of Amalek and the family of Esau, who represent through their entire genealogy the life of the

flesh. From the very beginning of the human race God has drawn the line of demarcation between two races—the fleshly and the spiritual man. Just outside the gate of Eden the division began. The family of Seth called themselves by the name of the Lord, and the race of Cain went off and built their city of culture and pride and became the pioneers of the worldliness and wickedness drowned and ameliorated by all the grace of human culture and all the attractions of earthly delight. The separation, alas! soon began to disappear, and in the days of Noah the two races had mingled and intermarried, and the progeny was a generation of monsters of iniquity so degenerate and depraved that God turned with loathing from the whole race and pronounced the awful sentence, "The end of all flesh is come before me, I will destroy man from off the face of the earth." After the flood God chose a separate family in the line of Abraham, and again endeavored to keep the chosen people separate. All along that line we see the earthly offshoots of the family tree separating from the central trunk and going out into the world.

The first of these was Ishmael, the type of the spirit of bondage and sin. The next of these was Esau, the progenitor of a whole race who inherited the earthly spirit of their father, who, for a morsel of meat, sold his birthright and afterwards married with the daughters of Canaan and became as corrupt and polluted as they. In the same line were the descendants of Lot's unnatural daughters, the Moabites and the Ammonites. But above all these, the race of Esau and Amalek were the marked representatives of the spirit of the flesh and the world. This was the reason that God pronounced the decree of their extermination. We find that when Israel went out of Egypt and started on their journey through the wilderness on their way to the Land of Promise, Amalek was the first to attack them. It is not difficult to see in this the foreshadowing of the fact that the first adversary that we have to contend with when we leave our sinful past of bondage and iniquity is the carnal nature in our own hearts, which soon asserts itself and tries to force us back to "the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." This is what Agag

represents and this is what each of us has found to our cost to be a very real element in the experience of a Christian life.

II. The name of Agag is next significant. It is from the root "Hak," which is a generic form denoting, like Pharoah, a ruler. It literally means ruler, and represents the spirit of self-will, self-assertion and independence in the human heart. Its prototype is Lucifer, the prince of light and glory, who, being lifted up with pride and refusing to be controlled, turned from an angel to a fiend, and has become the desperate leader of the rebellious hosts of hell. We see it next in the supreme temptation of the Fall—"Ye shall be as gods"—the desire for supremacy. We see it in the spirit of human ambition, in the Oriental despot, in the world conqueror, in the society belle and the political "boss." All belong to the same family. They are of the race of Amalek and the house of Agag. Their cry is like the prodigal, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me," and let me go away from paternal control and do as I please.

There is no country where it is so rampant

as our own. It appears to us as young mannishness and calls itself liberty, but its end is license, lawlessness and that lawless one who is yet to embody the combined elements of human wickedness and pride, and end the present dispensation by defying God and man, and perishing, like his father, the devil, in his presumptuous pride. This spirit is found in every human heart. It may be disguised in many insidious forms. It may call itself by illustrious names, and ape the highest ambitions and the noblest pretensions, but it is Agag and Satan every time. The thing in you that wants to rule, wants to have its own way, to be independent, refuse control, to despise reproof, is wrong in its very nature. The very first thing you need in order to be of any use anywhere is to be thoroughly broken, completely subjected and utterly crucified in the very core and centre of your will. Then you will accept discipline and learn to yield and obey in matters in themselves right, and your will will be so merged in His that He can use you as a flexible and perfectly adjusted instrument, to will only what God wills, and choose only what God chooses for you.

This is the real battle-ground of human salvation; this is the Waterloo of every soul; this is the test question of every redeemed life. This was the point where Saul lost his kingdom and Agag lost his life, and where still the eternal destinies are lost or won as we learn the lesson or refuse to be led in triumph by our conquering Lord.

Beloved, let us mark it well. Let us not miss the warning. Let us remember forever that no man can rule others until he himself is absolutely led of God, that no man can conquer foes till he first is conquered, that no man can lead in triumph the hosts of evil or the hearts of men until he himself is led in triumph the willing captive of the Saviour's love and the Master's will.

III. The decree of extermination. God has determined that the race of Amalek and the house of Agag should be utterly exterminated. They were not to be spared, but to be destroyed. It was a case of no compromise. There was nothing good in them. The least element of Agagism was destructive, and the whole community, with all their goods and belongings,

must be put out of existence just as the effects of a household where some had died of contagious disease must be wholly given to the flames. Now, this is God's decree against the flesh in us. It cannot be cleansed. It cannot be improved. It cannot be cultivated. It cannot be educated into ideas and principles. It must be exterminated.

Now, let us next inquire, what is the flesh? Is it the bad principle in man? Is it some outward or inward evil which can be cut away like a tumor by a surgical operation? Listen, "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be. So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." There is the uncompromising decree of the total depravity and the hopeless condition of the flesh. But now what is the flesh? Listen again: "But ye are not in the flesh if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." There is the distinction clear as as a ray of celestial light. Every man who has not the spirit of God is in the flesh, therefore, everything outside the Spirit of God is flesh. Therefore the flesh is not simply the sinful part

of human nature, but the whole of human nature. It is the Adam race. It is the natural man. It is the whole creature, and the whole thing is corrupt and pulluted. The tree is so crooked you cannot straighten it without cutting it in two. The tumor is so interwoven with the flesh that you cannot cut it without killing the man. There is no remedy. There is no hope. The old life must be laid down and the new creation, wholly born out of heaven and baptized with the Spirit of God, must take its place as a resurrected life, as a new creation, as an experience so supernatural and Divine that its possessor can truly say, "I am no longer the former man, I have died and Christ has taken my place. It is no longer I, but Christ that liveth in me." Beloved, don't try to sanctify the flesh. Slay it. Don't attempt to evolutionize the kingdom of heaven out of the kingdom of hell. It is not evolution, it is creation. It is not morals or manners, it is a miracle of grace and power. Take no risks upon the old man. He will fail you every time. You may think your trained hawk is a dove, but in an unsuspecting moment its beak will be buried in

your flesh. Your little wolf may have all the manners of the lamb, but in an evil hour it will destroy all your lambs and perhaps rend you limb for limb. It is hopeless, eternally corrupt. It cannot please God. It must be utterly dethroned, renounced and crucified with Christ.

IV. We see next the attempt of man to compromise with the flesh and to disregard this divine decree of its extermination. Saul spared Agag that he might grace his triumph, and he kept the best of the spoil that he might sacrifice unto the Lord his God. He obeyed the commandment of the Lord to a certain extent. He defeated Amalek and destroyed the nation in a sense. He did all God told him as far as it was agreeable and he took his own way just where it was pleasant. His obedience, therefore, was not really obedience to God, but truly self-will. He retained just enough of the flesh to destroy the whole service. The very essence of the command was extermination, and the very essence of the disobedience was compromise. The very worst thing about it was that he tried to put the evil to a good use. It was a very insult in the face of heaven to bring the

forbidden thing and offer it to the God he had defied. Now this is just the spirit of modern religious culture. Don't go too far. Don't be extreme. Don't be puritanical. Go easy. Be liberal. Meet the world half way. Marry that scoundrel to save him. Take that saloon-keeper into the church because you can make good use of his money. Put that brazen-faced woman up in the choir because she will draw her theatrical set to hear her sing. Go to the theater and the play with your husband to get him to go to church with you on Sunday.

Nonsense. In the first place in such an unequal contest on the enemy's ground the devil will always get the best of you, and instead of being saved the husband will drag to his level the woman that ventured on forbidden ground. The operatic singer, instead of bringing her set under the influence of religion, will bring the church to the level of her set and turn it into a club-house and a concert-room. The saloon-keeper's money will moderate the tone of the preaching so that it will be a comfort unto Sodom, and vice and sin can sit unchecked and even count itself a pillar of the cause of the Christ.

Think you that God will accept such service? Will He who owns the treasures of the universe and could create a mountain or a mine of gold in a moment, could send a thousand angels to sing in His sanctuaries, will He accept the money that is stained with the blood of souls and polluted with the filth of dethroned purity and honor? Will He accept the meritricious service that is sold for sordid gain? Will He go begging to the devil's shrine and ask his permission to let go his captives that they may be saved? Shame upon our unfaithfulness and our compromise! Oh, for the sword of a Samuel to hew to pieces the compromises that are an offence to heaven and a disgrace to the Bride of the Lamb.

V. We see the fawning pleading of the flesh for indulgence. Agag came forth, walking delicately, mincing like a silly, coquettish girl, smiling, seeking by his blandishments to disarm opposition, to win favor, looking like an incarnation of gentleness and innocence. A perfect gentleman. Surely, he could not harm a child! Surely, no one could dream of doing him harm! Ah, that is the old flesh pleading

for his life, pointing out its refinement, its culture, its graces, the good that it is doing and wants to do, its claim upon your consideration and regard. It will decorate your church with the finest taste; it will sing in your choirs with all the harmonies of classical music and attract crowds; it will bring society to your church; it will give you a bright and liberal theology. It is full of humanitarian plans for the relief of the suffering and the uplifting of degradation, and it offers you a Pullman palace car prepaid to the gates of heaven.

Surely, such a beautiful, gentle creature should not be rudely slain. But back of all its disguises and fawnings the Holy Ghost will show you, if you will let Him, the serpent's coil, the dragon's voice and the festering corpse of the charnel house.

Death is not always repulsive at the first sight. The daughter of Jairus was beautiful in her shroud, and a flush of life still lingered on her cheek, but she was as dead as Lazarus festering in his tomb. And so that sweet-faced girl, with her fawning charms, that brilliant minister with his intellectual sophistries, that

voice that sing like an angel in the choir, is as corrupt and pulluted as that poor creature that lies in yonder hospital dropping to pieces in the last stages of corruption, or that red-handed assassin reeking with the blood of his victim. They are both flesh, only at different stages of their moral putrification.

VI. We see in Agag the flesh feigning death. "Surely," said Agag, "the bitterness of death is past." And so you will find plenty of people in pulpits and pews, on platforms and in obscure corners, who would make you believe that they are utterly dead and yet who remind you when you get a good look at them of corpses walking around in their grave clothes. They are so conscious of their deadness that you know they are alive. They are so proud of their humility that you would rather they were proud than humble. They are so constantly in their own shadow that they try you by their religious egotism. Surely, dead people don't know it, don't think about it, are unostentatious, unobstructive, modest, simple, natural, free, and, like good water, without taste, color or consciousness. Oh, for this blessed simplic-

ity and this place of self-forgetting rest! Oh, for this fulfillment of the prayer, "Lord let me die so dead that I won't know it."

Beloved, there is no danger so great, especially among Christians somewhat advanced, as that of counting ourselves in a place where we really do not live. There is nothing so hardening to the heart as to take the place of self-surrender and then live a life of self-indulgence, self-will and adding to it the greater fault of self-complacency; calling things holy which are not, bringing the standard down to our own experience and filling ourselves with a self-complacent dream. Truly, we are to reckon that we are dead indeed, but we are to reckon that we are indeed dead. We are not to reckon that we are reckoned dead, but we are to reckon on a reality and we are to insist upon it and take nothing less from God or from ourselves. Oh, that we would dare to call things by their right names and have no counterfeit even from ourselves.

VII. We see self exposed and slain. Agag could not deceive Samuel. The old man pierces him through with one glance of the Holy

Ghost, and looking at his mincing, fawning figure, we can imagine him saying, "I know you with all your fawning. You are an old murderer. You are a selfish, cruel tyrant. Your sword has made many a mother childless, many an innocent victim has been crushed beneath your lust or hate, and back of all your smiles there is a skeleton and a serpent's sting." And then with that sharp sword he cut through his blandishments and hewed him to pieces.

A notorious woman, who has been the star of the vaudeville stage in the past year in this wicked metropolis, has had in her role a hideous song in which one verse may be translated "Go Bring Thy Mother's Heart to Feed My Dog." It is a true picture of that diabolical selfishness that seeks to hold the very soul of her idolatrous admirer in her power, that can even make him rend his loving mother's heart to please his devilish mistress. That is the skeleton back of the society queen. That is the serpent coiled around the heart of beauty and pride.

You say, "that is the darkest and worst picture." Ah, sin never stops till it reaches its worst, and God shows us in a single sample the

possibilities of the evil to which the tiniest seed and fairest bud of selfishness may yet ripen.

Beloved, let us ask God to expose it in our hearts. Let us open our being to the sword of Samuel, which is just the sword of the Holy Ghost. It is described in the Epistle to the Hebrews in these solemn, searching, but blessed words, "The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

All that we need to be delivered from any form of self and sin is to really be willing to see it, to recognize it, to call it by its right name, to throw off its disguise, to brand it with its true character, to pass sentence of death upon it, to stand to the sentence without compromise, to consent to no reprieve, to give God the right to slay it, and then there is power enough in the sword of the Spirit, in the fire of the Holy Ghost, in the blood of Calvary, in the faithfulness and love and grace of God to make us dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART.

"I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, which shall fulfill all My will." Acts xiii. 22.

DAVID is the antithesis of Saul, and as the latter foreshadowed the counterfeit kingdom which Satan is trying to palm off on the world, so David represents the true kingdom and the true spirit of His kingdom. Let us look for the present at David's call and consecration to his high office as God's anointed.

I. In I. Sam. xiii. 14 the prophet is represented as saying to Saul, "The Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath commanded Him to be captain over His people." God was seeking a true man to represent Him in the government of His people." It is peculiar to notice how this language is used by the prophet of Judah's declining kingdom, "I sought for a man among all their tribes and found none." God is represented as seeking for a true man who can understand His

thoughts and represent His will. Even David afterwards failed to meet His expectation, and it was not until the Lord Jesus at length stood on Jordan's banks, the first spotless man since Adam failed, that God at length could say, "Behold My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Saul had utterly failed and God was seeking for a man to take his place, but a little later the language changes and He exclaims, "I have found David, My servant; with My holy oil have I anointed him." Ps. lxxxix. 20. This is the passage from which our text is quoted by Paul in his address at Antioch. God had discovered a true man, or, as the inspired Scripture expresses it, "a man after My own heart who shall fulfill all My will." What God wanted was a man after His heart. Saul was a man after his own heart and after the world's heart. He represented man's ideals of manhood and he aimed to gratify his own ambitions and work out his own plans. God, the true theocratic King of Israel, wanted a man that would simply represent Him, that would catch His thought and reproduce it and work it out in his life. The same testi-

mony is borne to David elsewhere, when it is said, "David served his own generation by the will of God." The aim of David's life was to do the will of God.

But there is a third passage in this chain of references which completes the story of David's call. It is I. Samuel xvi. 1, "Fill thine horn with oil and go. I will send thee to Jesse, the Bethlehemite; for I have provided Me a king among his sons." God had been seeking a man and He had found him at last, and here the secret is told: "I have provided Me a king." The reason he met God's expectations was because God had provided him. The people provided Saul. He was their choice; but God provided David contrary to the expectations of man and all outward appearances or probabilities. God never will find things that will satisfy Him until He first provides it. The secret of pleasing God is to possess God, and let Him possess you; for He gives what He commands and enables for that which He requires.

As we look at these two men—Saul and David—it is not strange if we should be sometimes perplexed in reference to God's strong

preference of the one and unqualified rejection of the other, for there was much in Saul to commend, and there was much in David to condemn. Saul was naturally noble, generous and brave. The very act of the character of Jonathan, his son, implies that there must have been something naturally good in the character of his father, so far as any fallen man can have any good in him. Then the early life of Saul has many attractive features. He seems to have been a dutiful son, seeking industriously for his father's lost asses, and when he failed to find them he quickly responds to the suggestion to go to the prophet and ask counsel of God.

There were some elements of piety apparent in his conduct; and when Samuel gave him his extraordinary commission, he behaved himself with singular propriety. He kept his secret well. He opened his heart to receive the Holy Spirit, who came upon him in a peculiar power. He joined a band of prophets and sang and ministered like them. If we except excessive humility in connection with his inauguration—in his hiding among the stuff—he seemed unobtrusive and becoming in his deportment.

His first exploits as commander and king of Israel's hosts were marked, and still later in his life his attachment to David breaks out in the midst of his wild and passionate vindictiveness, and he breaks down and cries like a child when he discovers the generosity of the man whose life he had been seeking.

Then, on the other hand, David had most glaring faults, notwithstanding all the beautiful traits of his personal character and his deep and genuine piety.

God's word does not excuse the unbridled lust and the cool deliberate cruelty with which he could, as Nathan expresses it, snatch the one ewe lamb from the bosom of his faithful servant and soldier, Uriah, and then calmly and cunningly send that brave and loyal man, in the very ardor of his devotion to his king, right into the jaws of death, on purpose to get rid of his interference with his royal master's shameful selfishness. The worst of all is the torpor and paralysis of David's conscience, which for two whole years was utterly insensible to the double-dyed crime until God's strong reproof and chastening at length brought him to his senses,

and struck a flash of light into his deadened moral sensibilities. God's faithful Word always tells the worst about the subjects of His grace. How then can we explain this strong language of preference in which God speaks of David and the unequivocal censure which condemned and rejected Saul?

1. Saul represented self-will; David represents God's will. Saul's great object was to carry out his own ambition. David's chief desire was to understand and accomplish the Divine purpose concerning him. When he erred he did it blindly, but the moment he recognized and realized his disobedience, he broke down like a penitent child. There was no self-will, no obstinacy, no rebellion in his spirit. There was error, terrible error. There was impulse, there was earthly passion; but his will was true to God when he really understood the will of God.

2. Saul represented the natural man, and David the spiritual man. Saul was the embodiment of what was best in human nature. All that David had that was commendable was due to the grace of God. and speaking of his own

life afterwards he could say with the deepest humility: "Who am I, and what is my people? for all things are given of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee."

David was a monument of Divine grace. Saul was the embodiment of human nature, self, selfishness and pride. God hates our pride and wants our weakness, self-renunciation, nothingness and dependence. David had learned the lesson of Divine grace, and therefore God allowed him to be one of the princes in that kingdom of grace where our highest hope is the mercy of our God.

This is the kingdom to which we belong, and its watchword forever shall be, "Not unto us, oh, Lord, but unto Thy Name be the glory?" It was because David had learned this watchword that God could choose him and use him notwithstanding even his gravest faults.

3. The sorrows and sins of Saul drove him further from God, while David's brought him nearer. This is one of the most certain tests of our spiritual condition; how are we affected by our trials? Do they discourage us, or do they drive us to the bosom of our heavenly

Friend? Still more searching is the question, How are we affected by our faults, our failures and our sins, when we discover them? Do we try to cover them, to excuse them, or, failing in this, do we give up in discouragement and despair, and say, "There is no use trying; everything is against me?" Poor Saul went from bad to worse, and at last turned from God and sought counsel from Satan when the heavenly source on which he had depended failed him at last. His trust never was quite true, or he would have clung to it most closely in the hour of darkness and seeming despair. David came out of his worse faults a better man, and God could teach him, even by his temptations and sins, to die to self and rise to loftier heights of the grace of God.

There is nothing more perfectly instructive and more supremely strong than the trial of David's heart unfolded to us in the 51st Psalm, which gives us the inner history of his soul after his greatest sin. There is no notion of trifling, there is no excuse or palliation of anything. He paints his crime in the darkest colors. He talks of blood guiltiness. No, he

goes deeper than his crime, to his own personal character, and he says, "I was shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin." He sees nothing good in himself. Every prop is gone, every hope is gone, as far as the human is concerned. After a life of blessed communion with God he stands self-convicted of inexcusable weakness and total depravity. Could a human soul ever be placed in a more terrible situation? But for the grace of God it would drive any man to despair and self-destruction.

But we see this man looking straight up into the clear blue sky of heaven and claiming with unshaken confidence the infinite mercy of his God, and the higher spiritual blessing that he had not before. "Wash me," he cries, "and I shall be whiter than snow." According to the days wherein he has seen evil so he dares to claim that God will bless him with the days of heaven. His profound penitence is only surpassed by his boundless faith. He sinks to the uttermost depths, and then he rises to the very heights of heavenly grace. This was, doubtless, the crisis of David's life, and out of this he came, not only a saved, but a sanctified man,

crucified to self and to sin, and knowing, even as we know, in some measure at least, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

One cannot help being reminded of the parallel between this Old Testament story and the New Testament picture of Judas and Peter. Like poor Saul, Judas was driven by his sin to desperation and suicide. Like David, Peter sinned as deeply, but he received the unspeakable grace of repentance, and there was something in his heart which led him in his darkest sorrow to the mercy of Jesus. Judas "went out and hanged himself," Peter "went out and wept bitterly," and when Jesus was risen from the dead and stood at length upon the Galilean shore, Peter did not slink away from His presence abashed and guilty, but he leaped into the sea and was the first to swim to the shore, and there he is at the blessed feet of Him whom he had once dishonored. God give us all the spirit of grace, which even in our darkest sorrows and deepest sins will turn heavenward for mercy that will pardon, and grace that waits to help in time of need.

II. David's anointing to his high calling.

God has called his servant, now He sets him apart. Let us notice

1. That David's anointing immediately followed the death of Agag. It is not until self dies that Christ can be enthroned as king in our hearts and lives. David cannot come in till Agag goes.

2. David's anointing as the choice of God among all his brethren was contrary to every human appearance and expectation. Even Samuel expected that one of the other sons would have been chosen, nor Abinadab's splendid appearance, nor Shammah's attractive person could meet the Divine conditions, and they were all passed by until the whole seven had been rejected, and they had to send for the youngest born, the lad of the family, whose extreme youth had made him kind of errand boy for all the rest and left him entirely out of sight on this occasion.

It was not accidental that David was the eighth of Jesse's sons, for the number seven and eight are especially significant and symbolical in the Scriptures. Seven represents the perfection of the old dispensation and the nat-

ural creation. It is the first week. Eight is the first day of the second seven, and thus it represents the new creation and Divine order. Therefore, circumcision was on the eighth day representing the death of the old life and the beginning of a new life. Therefore was Christ's resurrection on the first day, which is also the eighth day, the beginning of the second week. The seven sons of Jesse represent the perfection and the completeness of the earthly, and David, the eighth, represents the new generation and the new dispensation, the supernatural and the Divine. It is not based on the conditions and qualifications which appear in the natural, therefore the stronger, the wise, and the attractive, are passed by, and little David is chosen, instead of Eliab and Shammah; because "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the strong; and the foolish things to confound the wise; and things which are not to bring to naught the things which are: that no flesh should glory in His presence."

3. David's anointing was more than an outward symbol. It was accompanied by a special

impartation of the Holy Spirit, who came upon him from that day forward and enabled him for all his trials, duties and difficulties. David's life henceforth was supernatural and Divine. The Holy Ghost was his counsellor and his strength, empowering his arm for battle and instructing his brain for the demonstration of his great trust, and the vessel of the Holy Ghost and the instrument of the power of God. In like manner the Holy Spirit is our Divine enduement for every need of our Christian life and work, and the direct source of complete supply and the equipment for every situation in which God can place us. He will give us wisdom and counsel. He will give us courage and faith. He will give us patience and love. He will work for us in the providences and circumstances of life. He will influence for us hands and hearts of men, and He will carry through our plans and purposes which are according to the will of God to success and blessing; and it is our privilege to count upon Him for all needed supplies, for every trust that is committed to our hands.

4. The supernatural anointing and enabling

for his great trust is confirmed by God's manifest seal upon his life, that all men were made to know by his actual life and character that he was God's chosen and anointed one. God not only calls us, but He puts His credentials upon us and forces men to see that we are His chosen servants and representatives. And so we read in chapters 16 and 18 this extraordinary testimony that one of Saul's servants brought to the palace of the king, "Behold I have seen David, the son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in prayer, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with Him." What a testimony! Personally attractive, wise, judicious, with cultivated tastes, and a brave, valiant soldier; and, above all, a man of God. Beloved, God wants the world to see this in us also and to bear witness to it so manifestly that we shall not need letters of commendation, but our lives shall be "living epistles known and read of all men."

First, God opened the way for his going to the court of Saul in the most natural and providential manner, as his companion

and armor bearer, to cheer his nervous and distracted moments by his wonderful harp and gift of song, and to become acquainted with the life of the court which he was afterwards to fill so prominently. And so God will open our way if we are God's men. No combination of circumstances can shut you out. If you are right with heaven every circumstance and providence will conspire to bring you the occupation, the opening, the work, the friends, for which you and God have need. You do not need to plead the wiles of human diplomacy and selfish influence to ingratiate yourself. David was not seeking the kingdom, the kingdom was seeking him. Beloved, wherever God has a David, a Daniel or a Joseph, He has a place prepared for him, and all the powers of earth and hell shall be unable to keep him out of it.

5. It was necessary once more that David should be proved; and so the situation came at last. The mighty Goliath had defied the armies of Israel and the God of heaven for days together, and no man had dared to answer his challenge. But one day David came to the camp to visit his brethren, and as he heard his de-

fiant boast he modestly and simply answered, "Let no man's heart fail because of him. Thy servant will go and fight this Philistine." It did not even occur to him that he was doing anything unusual. It was so natural for him to be noble that he was unconscious of his own nobility. We need not dwell upon the stirring scene. The unobtrusive modesty and the fearless trust of the brave young warrior and the utter simplicity with which he committed the whole issue to God of heaven, how could his trust be disappointed?

There was but a minute of suspense, as the giant stalked forth in his defiant pride, and the shepherd lad with his loaded sling ran down the valley to meet his foe, and hurling that stone with heaven-directed aim, saw the giant fall, his skull crushed in, and his life crushed out, while all the Philistine hosts were flying in dismay, and Israel knew that God's choice was vindicated before earth and heaven.

Beloved, the ordination that you and I can ever have is not the placing of human hands upon our heads, but the living power of the living God, and the actual works of Christ

wrought out in our lives. These are the credentials that man can understand and that no criticism can silence or neutralize. Oh, may the Holy Spirit thus choose, thus call, thus qualify, and thus seal our life and ministry.

THE TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS OF DAVID'S FAITH.

"I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Psalm xxvii. 13.

"But the God of all grace who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." I. Peter v. 10.

THESE two passages express the supreme lesson of the nine years of David's life that immediately followed his anointing as God's appointed king. It is the law of faith for God to give us the promise of blessing, and then put us to the test to see if we will hold our faith and prove worthy of our high calling. No life has ever been more severely tested than David's, and everything in his life, the record of his personal trials and triumphs is given in such fullness of detail that we can walk by his side as we read the story; and we can even feel the beatings of his inmost heart as we follow the wondrous psalms, in which he has given us

the deeper portrait of his inmost heart and his spiritual experience.

I. His trials:

1. The first of these was Saul's jealous hate. The favor with which he met him at first and welcomed him to his palace and his court as his trusted minstrel and honored armor-bearer, and even as the captain of his guard, was soon turned into mistrust and jealousy as he saw that he had already won the hearts of the people, and he began to feel that David was the dreaded rival of whom Samuel had already given him a solemn intimation. The first open outbreak occurred when the maidens of Israel shouted the praises of Saul and David, and ascribed to Saul his thousands, and to David his ten thousands, of trophies of victory. Saul "eyed" David, we are told, from that day forward and was very wroth. There is nothing more painful than to be the victim of keen-eyed jealousy, which watches all our movements and imputes wrong to the most innocent action. It injects a sting into every pleasure, and destroys the frankness and confidence of every friendship.

2. Next, we find Saul intriguing for the

destruction of David, and using even the affection of Michal, his own daughter, who loved the noble young Bethlehemite, and whose love her father played with, that he might inveigle David into a fatal snare and sacrifice his life while nobly striving to win the two hundred Philistine lives whom Saul demanded as the dowry of David's chosen bride. But God carried him safely through, and Saul had the mortification of having to give his daughter to the man he hated and place him in the powerful position of the king's son-in-law.

3. Next, we find Saul cherishing no longer a mere sentiment of jealousy but a deep, determined purpose of destruction. Twice he hurled the javelin at David's breast as he played in his presence, and when he was forced to fly he sent his officers to pursue him to his own home, where he was saved only by the strategy of his loving wife, who let him down through a window that he might fly from his pursuers (chap. xix. 11, 12).

4. Next, Saul pursued him even to Ramah, whither he fled to the protection of Samuel the prophet; but as Saul and his soldiers came to

the prophet's precinct, lo, the old spirit of inspiration came upon him and his soldiers, and they were compelled to prophesy like the rest, and returned baffled by the interposition of God. But it now became but too evident that Saul's purpose was unchanged, and that Samuel's protection could not save David from his murderous hands.

5. Next, he fled to Nob, the priestly city, where Abimelech, the high priest, and the priestly colony dwelt, and there he obtained refreshment and also the direction of God through the priestly ephod, and took away with him the sword of Goliath. But, alas! he had soon the deep sorrow, far more distressing to him than his own danger, of learning that for this kind and hospitable act Abimelech and the whole priestly family had been cruelly slain by the order of Saul, through the mean and treacherous tale-bearing of Doeg, the Edomite, who had been the witness of Abimelech's kindness and had quickly gone to Saul to tell the tale.

It was in vain that Abimelech pleaded that he only meant to honor Saul in honoring his

son-in-law and knew nothing of the trouble between them. His life was ruthlessly torn from him, and when even Saul's soldiers refused to touch the Lord's anointed priest the low and despicable Doeg was only too glad to do the work, and with his own hand he slew in cold blood eighty-five of the priests of the Lord. And not only so, but the very city of Nob was razed to the ground and every living creature in it was ruthlessly murdered. David learned from Abiathar, the only survivor of this tragedy, the fearful story, and his heart must have been crushed with the deepest of all griefs —that of being the innocent occasion of bringing ruin upon others because of their attachment to him.

6. The next great sorrow that came to David was the loss of his own dearest friends. Michal, his wife, was cruelly taken from him, and given to a neighboring chief with the hope that he would become the murderer of David through jealous rivalry. Jonathan, his dearest friend, became separated from him, and after one more parting they never met again. Samuel, his aged and venerated father in the Lord, was sep-

arated from him for the remainder of his life, and when the old prophet died and was buried with high honor in Israel, David was not permitted to stand by his bier or pay the last tribute of affection to the man who would have appreciated his presence more than all the others. Even his own father and mother became separated from him, for with loving consideration for their safety he early took measures to remove them from Bethlehem, where they were sure to be the objects of Saul's unkindness, and to send them away over to the land of Moab, to a remote kinsman of his, through Ruth, his ancestress, until his own plans should be settled. Henceforth he was alone and friendless, a fugitive among the mountains, and with no friend to comfort him but God alone.

7. Next, he fled to Achish, the king of Gath. Here he found himself in even greater danger, for Achish and the Philistines remembered but too well his victory over Goliath, their champion, and he had to find means to escape with his life from the Philistine court. It must have been a peculiar trial to the simple, frank nature

of David to have to resort to artifice for self-protection.

8. His next refuge was the cave of Adullam in one of the valleys of Southern Judah, and there his camp became the resort of all the outlaws, criminals and discontented persons in the land, who fled to his standard because of a certain community of distress and helplessness. So the man who had been accustomed to the sweetest of associations and the most congenial friendships found himself the chief of a band of freebooters, a sort of Rob Roy, at the head of a lot of vagabonds whom he had to accept as his comrades and friends.

Oh, ye who complain of uncongenial associations, learn a lesson from the life of David. He did not complain of his associates, but he set himself to lift them up to his own level, and before he got through every man of them was a nobleman, and they were trained to be the future princes of Israel. This is what Christ did when He came down from heaven to be the companion of rude and ignorant men of earth. This is the honor of the missionary who goes among the heathen, and, overlooking all their

degradation and misery, finds it his chief honor and glory to lift them up to the loftiest and noblest lives and, like Christ, who has thus lifted us, found His joy in realizing the glorious transformation. If God has associated you with those who are beneath you, why, lift them, inspire them, and let the wilderness and the solitary place of your life rejoice and blossom as the rose.

9. Next, he had the bitterness of treachery. While a fugitive in the mountains he found that the Philistines had invaded the land and attacked the city of Keilah, and he personally marched to its rescue and saved it from its enemies; but, in turn, instead of gratefully remembering his kindness, the men of Keilah plotted to betray him into the hands of Saul, and, but for God's forewarning through the oracle of the priest, he would have perished through this cruel conspiracy. There are few trials harder than to have our kindness met by base ingratitude, and to have those we have befriended and even saved become our cruelest foes. Was there any cup of sorrow that David did not drink?

10. Next, we find him pursued by Saul even into the wilderness with a troop of three thousand soldiers, until he had to fly from place to place and find new refuges among the barren mountains and the precipitous fields of Maon, Engedi and the desolate region around the Dead Sea. But all through this God protected him, and enabled him on two occasions to have the opportunity of taking the life of Saul had he so wished, and of proving his magnanimity in the very sight of the king. Day by day for weeks and months he was hunted like a partridge in the mountains, his life was continually in his hand, and the strong language of many of the psalms can only be understood as we realize his imminent and instant peril and his marvellous escapes from destruction. Are you in a position of danger? Is your life assailed? Are you surrounded by enemies on every side? The God of David still lives to deliver those who trust Him and sends His angels to encamp around their dwelling.

11. One of the meanest trials of his wilderness life was the churlish and niggard shepherd of Carmel, who, after David had

protected his herdmen and his flocks for several months in the mountains, turned back his messengers with coarse insult and sent to David the rude taunt that he was probably a runaway slave from his master, and why should he give him his flesh or his bread. For once David was provoked to wreak sudden vengeance on this miserable cur, and was saved from the crime by the tact of Abigail, Nabal's beautiful wife. There are times when the bite of a mosquito is more trying than the roaring of a lion. There are little imps in life that worry us more than the larger foes that assail us, and we need more grace to keep our sweetness amid the thousand petty and harassing worries than in the roar of the torrent and the crash of the tempest. David knew this, and Christ knew it well. The last and bitterest trials of the cross were the taunts and the jeers and insults of the crowd whom He could have withered by a glance had He allowed Himself for a moment to lose the victory of His love.

12. The crowning trial came at last when, in a moment of utter discouragement, he said, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul, and

there is nothing better than that I should go into the land of the Philistines," and so in an hour of unbelief he left the land where God had told him to stay, and went down and accepted a home at Ziklag, which he made his headquarters for nearly a year and a half. Thence he went out on marauding expeditions against the Philistines, carefully concealing his movements lest they should drive him from the country, working all the while with loyalty toward his own land.

But at last the crowning disaster came, and he returned one day with his soldiers to find Ziklag a heap of smouldering ashes and all their wives and property carried away by a horde of Amalekites. For a while they could only lift up their voices and weep, and then we are told that they wept until they had no more power to weep. It was an hour of hopeless despair, and at last David's very companions turned upon him, and even threatened to stone him as the occasion of all their sorrow. But just then shines out the triumph of his faith, and it is added: "But David encouraged himself in the Lord, his God." Quickly he sent for Abiathar,

the priest, and asked counsel of God, and by Divine direction he pursued and overtook them. Striking them with sudden surprise, David scattered them and recovered all the spoil, their wives and children and their property unharmed. Indeed, so vast was the booty, that he was able to send a portion of the spoil to all his friends in Judah as a kind of foretaste of the kingdom which he was soon to bring them.

Such were some of the tests and trials of David's early life. God gave him the promise of the kingdom, and then He put him to the test for nine bitter years until he was disciplined and trained for his high calling.

II. Notice the spirit in which he endured these trials:

1. It was the spirit of prudence. He was not reckless and he did not bring needless trials upon himself, as we so often do. Many of our afflictions are simply the results of our imprudence or foolishness; but we are told expressly that "David behaved himself wisely," and gave no occasion to his enemies to reproach him or to take advantage of him. It is a great thing in the hour of sorrow to maintain a good con-

science, and, looking up into the face of God and man, to be able to say, "I know nothing against myself."

2. He kept his sweetness and his love through all the bitter provocation. Again and again the enemy tried to make him meet hate with hate and wrong with wrong, but he triumphed in the end in the spirit of generosity and love, and even against the injustice of Saul he made even that wicked man acknowledge his own righteousness and magnanimity when he might have taken his life, and nobly spared him in spite of the demands of his own soldiers that he should slay him when God gave him the opportunity. Next to a good conscience is a sweet spirit in standing through tests and trials. Love can endure all things, but even faith will break down if we lose our gentleness and become irritable and vindictive.

3. He overcame by faith. It was this that Satan assailed as he ever does. It is the trial of our faith which is much more precious than gold that perisheth. It is thus that he assailed the Master in the wilderness. God had told Jesus that He was His beloved Son, and then

suddenly He plunged Him into circumstances of deepest distress, and Satan pointed to the barren desert and the naked rocks and Christ's own physical hunger, and he whispered with a horrid sneer, "If thou be the Son of God." But Christ believed in His Father's love and waited for His Father's deliverance. And so He comes to us and points to our distress, tries to make us doubt our promise; but let us never let go our confidence, but hold it fast, for it hath great recompense of reward. God is just waiting to see if we will trust Him to the end.

4. David not only believed but he rejoiced. More even than faith and the very blossom and fruit of faith is the spirit of joy and praise. All through those days of darkness David kept his joy and his song. He not only trusted but he rejoiced. He not only stood, but he stood singing, triumphing and rejoicing, and out of these dark hours have come to us the sweetest of his psalms and the noblest notes of victorious praise that are found in this wonderful Psalter with its unequalled notes of joy and triumph.

Space will not permit us to go over all the

psalms which are described with some prefix connecting them with these days. There is the fifty-ninth, written when they were watching his house to slay him. There is the eleventh, sung when he was like a bird driven to its mountain and hunted as a partridge among the hills. There is the fifty-seventh, composed when he was in the cave, and the fifty-second when he heard of Doeg's despicable crime against the priests of Nob, and the fifty-fourth, when the Zithites are treacherously trying to sell his life to Saul. But out of them all there are no grander songs than four that we will specially name:

One of these is the twenty-seventh, a Psalm of triumph, which was written just after he parted from his father and mother in the land of Moab, and was left alone in the desert. Oh, what a new meaning it gives to the words literally translated, "Though my father and mother have left me, yet the Lord will take me up." Oh, what a lofty elevation it adds to the shout, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" "I had

fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

The next of these psalms of praise is the thirty-fourth, perhaps the richest of all the psalms of David in the spirit of triumphant praise, but we may have often failed to notice that this psalm was written when David was driven from the presence of Achish, the king of Gath, and was supposed to be out of his mind. People still think us out of our mind when we use his language, but he was anything but crazy when, amid his desolation and helplessness, he could look up and say, "I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth." "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all." And thus looking over the hosts of all his enemies and the camps of all his foes, he could add, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."

There is another of these memorial psalms. It was written, we are told, just after God had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. It is, perhaps, the

most elegant in imagery of all his compositions. How vividly he speaks of his sorrows: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me." How sublimely he describes the interposition of God for his deliverance (verses 6-10 and 16-19). How eloquently he describes the glory of his Divine Friend (verses 29-35). How tenderly, as a soft undertone, there sings through all the magnificent oratorio of his praise that little soft, sweet chord that tells at once the story of David and of God, "Thy gentleness hath made me great."

There is yet one more psalm which, while written later in David's life, doubtless refers all through to the story of David and of Saul. It is the thirty-seventh Psalm. Back of these wonderful beatitudes there are two figures that we can clearly trace. One of them is the man of hate who seeks to slay the righteous. The other is the man of meekness who frets not because of evil doers, who trusts in the Lord, who commits his way unto the Lord, who rests in the Lord and waits patiently

for Him, and the culmination is, "I saw the wicked in great power spreading himself like the green bay tree, yet he passes away, and, lo! he was not. Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." That is Saul. And then "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." The meek shall inherit the earth, the meek shall delight themselves in abundance of peace.

Beloved, out of David's sorrows came David's songs. What is God getting out of our trials? What are we getting out of them? Are we meeting them with wisdom, with love, with faith and with praise? After three thousand years are we yet so far behind the man who not only sang, but who lived the song of faith and praise in life's darkest hour? Do we wonder that he was "a man after God's own heart?" God help us to be more like him, too!

MAKING JESUS KING.

"Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom which My Father has appointed unto Me." Luke xxii. 28, 29.

"David therefore departed thence and escaped to the cave Adullam; and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men." I. Sam. xxii. 1, 2.

"All these were of one heart to make David king." I. Chron. xii. 38.

WE last looked at David as a fugitive. We are now to behold him crowned a king. Nine years of bitter persecution are exchanged for forty years of glorious triumph. In his kingdom we behold a type of the kingdom of his greater Son and the crowning of the Lord Jesus Christ as earth's millennial Sovereign; and in the loyal fellow-sufferers and soldiers who so nobly fought to to win for David the high crown of Israel, we

behold the picture of men and women that God is summoning today to follow our rejected and crucified Master without the camp, in reproach and suffering, to win for Him the crown of all the world and then to sit down with Him on His throne even as He is set down with His Father upon His throne.

It is said of the proud Napoleon that he refused to be crowned by human hands, but with his own arrogant fingers he placed upon his brow the crown of what he designed as the world's last empire, and stood before the world a self-made monarch. Our blessed Lord and Saviour, while He might well conquer His own kingdom without the help of any of His followers, chooses to take it from our loving hands and to permit us to share with Him at once His sufferings and His glory.

In the followers of David and in the successive stages of his triumph and coronation we see the most vivid foreshadowings of the age to come, and upon which we are about to enter. There were three stages in David's kingdom.

The first was his trial, when he was a fugi-

tive from Saul, and his court was the cave of Adullam, and his followers the outcasts of Israel. In like manner our blessed Lord is also as yet a King without His crown, still driven without the camp, rejected by the world and followed by a faithful few to whom He is still saying, "Ye are they that have continued with Me in My temptations."

The second stage of David's kingdom was his coronation at Hebron, where for seven and a half years he reigned over the tribe of Judah alone, while Abner maintained for Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, at Mahanaim, a temporary crown and kingdom over the other tribes of Israel. So, in like manner, our Lord Jesus Christ is to have at His coming the first fruits of the gospel and the called-out ones of the first resurrection, and He shall form with them the government and the rulers of the millennial age; for God is not now calling to Himself the subjects of His future kingdom, but He is calling out its rulers, and preparing the men and the women who are to form His cabinet and sit with Him on His throne in the age to come.

There was a third stage in the kingdom of David when, more than seven years later, he became the king of Israel, and the whole land recognized its sovereign and his sceptre extended over the surrounding nations until he was the ruler of an important and more mighty kingdom than any of his time, reaching from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates, and from the Persian Gulf to Damascus and Lebanon. And so there will be a heavenly stage in the kingdom of Christ when, in the millennial years, He shall reign from sea to sea, and all the nations shall be subject to Him, and earth's millions shall, without exception, own His peaceful sway.

Now we are called to take part in the first two stages, to be true to Him in His exile, and to reign with Him in His first coming, and then to sit at His side and rule over the universal empire which He is then to bring.

Let us look at the men that helped to make David king, and let us emulate them and be "of one heart to make Jesus King."

I. They were sinful men; they were outcast men; they were men without a character or a

reputation; they were men in debt and deep discredit; men under a cloud and without a hope, whom the instinct of a common sorrow drove to David's side in the caves and mountains of Judah; and he accepted them, not because they were bad men, but because they were true to him, and he trained them and lifted them up to his own level and afterwards made them his princes and commanders in the kingdom of Judah and Israel. And so our leader and Lord is calling to His side and choosing for His kingdom not the mighty and the noble of the earth nor always the good, but He hath chosen the "weak things' and the "foolish things, and the things that are despised" and "the things that are not." Yes, He has even chosen the most worthless, hopeless and sinful of our race to be the special objects of His mercy and the prized jewels of His crown.

It is the noblest nature that Satan seeks to devour and destroy. When a man is at his worst you may be sure that he might have been at his best under different influences. God takes such men and turns them back to their

true center and there is power in the blood of Christ and in the Spirit of God not only to blot out the past but transform the character, and out of the thistle and the thorn to create the fir tree and the myrtle for the Paradise of God. Don't let your sinfulness keep you back. Don't let your misery discourage you. Don't let your failure crush you. Others have failed you. You have failed yourself. Hope is gone. All is lost. There is One that will receive you still. One drop of His blood will make you pure. One touch of His hand will make you noble and in one moment you may pass from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son and the aristocracy of the new Jerusalem.

II. They were true men. The one redeeming quality of their lives was that they loved David and were loyal to him. When they first came to him David had good cause to suspect their motives, for what but loyalty could bring men to such a place, and he frankly looked them in the face, and said: "If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me, my heart shall be knit unto you; but if ye be come to

betray me to my enemies, seeing there is not wrong in my hands, the God of my fathers look upon it and rebuke it." Then came the frank reply, "Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse; peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee." No matter how lost a man may be there is one thing that may always become a link of hope and a bond of contact with God, and that is, the simple, single, rare and indispensable quality of true sincerity. If the worst of men can look up into your face with an honest look and an earnest heart and say, "God knows, and you know that I mean to be true," there is hope, there is salvation for him, and all the resources of God's grace and strength are on his side. But a traitor, a double-hearted man, a man with a reservation, a man, who, back of all his pretences and services, is seeking his own interest and ready to barter all else for it in the supreme moment, that man is base to the core, a man of whom we may well be afraid in every true work. He is bound to betray himself at last. He is the most unfortunate creature on earth. The very object which he is

seeking will yet fail him, and detected of all men, rejected of God and execrated by himself, he will go down to the damnation of a hypocrite and a traitor.

III. These men were brave as well as true. They were not afraid of danger. Their faces were as the face of lions, and even Jordan's swelling floods could not dismay them. They did not wait for propitious circumstances or favorable seasons, but they made circumstances subservient to their high purpose and turned difficulties into stepping-stones of victory. They came up to Jordan in the first month, when all its waves had overflowed, and they found on both banks of the river a strong force of armed foes; but they met their enemies on the eastern shore and scattered them, and then they plunged into the swollen floods and swam and forded the raging Jordan, and when they landed on the western bank, lo, another army was confronting them; but again they charged their foes and scattered them, and came to David victorious over flood and foe.

And so the men that would make Jesus King must not wait for favorable circumstances nor

be intimidated by the devil's growl. The best evidence that you are in God's will will often be some sudden difficulty, some fierce assault of the foe, some bitter trial of your faith. When Paul began his great campaign to give the Gospel to Europe, the first place he found himself was in the Philippian jail with bleeding limbs and feet fettered in stocks. But this did not dismay him. Rather he accepted it as a pledge of the devil's hate and the Father's love, and he went forward undismayed until all Europe had received the Gospel, and victory had been wrung from the defiance of the foe. God is preparing men today for days of conflict, danger and the uttermost trial, before the Lord shall come. Let us not shrink from the higher classes in the University of God and the School of Sorrow. There all great souls have graduated, and there all high character must be proved. God give us courage, and make us brave enough to believe all that this Book declares, to testify all that we believe, to live all that we testify, to do what others only dream about, and glory in what others dare but do.

IV. They were all-round men. "They were

armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left." So many Christians have only got one hand for service; the other is so busy grasping the world that they cannot be whole-hearted for God, or free-handed for work. So many men can work when things suit them, but cannot adjust themselves to unfavorable circumstances and unusual methods. God wants ready men, and all-round men, who can meet the devil, who can touch their fellow-men at every point, and who can adjust themselves to all the necessities of the Master's work.

V. They were men of faith. "They could handle shield and buckler." The shield is the type of faith. The buckler is the type of a kind of faith that we do not have to keep, for it keeps us. It is what Christ calls "the faith of God." It is a Divine trust wrought within us by the Holy Ghost and fixed, like the buckler, which was fastened on the arm, and still remained even though the shield might fall and every other defence be lost. The work of hasting our Master's kingdom needs men of mighty faith, with the Divine trust which rests not even on our own best feelings, but is nothing

less than the faith of the Son of God who lives within us.

VI. They were men of self-sacrifice. They shrank from no peril or pain when their leader needed their service or their sacrifice.

A nobler example is given of three of these heroic men who one day, when David longed for a drink from the well of Bethlehem by his father's gate, dashed through the ranks of the Philistines, who filled the valley between, and while their enemies scattered on either side, or looked on with amazement, they brought back a helmet full of crystal water and handed it to their king. But David would not drink of that which was the blood of men who jeopardized their lives for him.

The richest quality of love is sacrifice, and the noblest credential of any work is the spirit on the part of its members which has laid every selfish interest down at Jesus' feet, and counts all things loss for Christ; which holds its money, its friendships, its life, all subservient to the Master's claim, and, living a dying life, at last gives life itself as a willing offering to Him who gave His life for us. In this selfish

and luxurious age, it is the rarest quality found, but it is the most needed, and as the end approaches and the last tribulation draws near, the age of martyrdom will reach the climax, and the tears of sorrow and the blood of sacrifice be transformed into the jewels of the coronation day. It needs a greater sacrifice sometimes to live than to die, and the men who will be found some day ready to die for Christ are those whose lives are now laid down in ten thousand little tests that come to us all from day to day.

VII. They were wise men. "They had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do." Christ needs more than blind devotion. He wants intelligent partnership in service. He still needs men that have understanding of the times, not wasting their lives on ideas that are obsolete and for work that is needless, but grasping the Master's thought and working out His plan for the age in which we live. "David served his own generation by the will of God." It is a great thing to understand the will of God for our own generation and fulfill it. Millions of money are thrown

away today in building costly cathedrals and ambitious universities for the display of man's ecclesiastical and intellectual pride, none of which helps forward in the faintest degree the kingdom of God or the coming of Christ. Many a well-meant offer is wasted for lack of sympathy with the Master's thought. Millions are giving and working today to get the world converted instead of working intelligently with Christ to gather out a people for His name, and to hasten His return, and the inauguration of that day which will accomplish more for the conversion of the world than all the centuries of our ignorance and failure.

VIII. They were disciplined men. "They were men that could keep rank." They were working together. They were working in unity, in order, and in wise organization. Many a brave man throws his life away in isolation and independent efforts, and they fail because of no wise co-operation. The great work of missions requires fellowship of service, and intelligent organization by which workers on the field can stand in touch with those at home, and all together move as an army in wise and

intelligent co-operation. Christ wants men who are able to subordinate their own strong opinions and work in subjection to one another in the fear of God. No man is fit to lead until he has long learned to follow. No man is a good commander who has not proved a perfect soldier. No lesson needs more to be learned by young missionaries than the lesson of humility and mutual subjection in Christian service. It has been wisely said that there is no trouble in getting along with a fully consecrated Christian, but a half consecrated one is always in trouble and always getting others into trouble.

IX. They were men of one patriotic purpose to make David king. They had a sublime ambition and a single aim, and to this all else was subordinate. They were there to make David king. This suggests the real purpose of Christian consecration and service in our day. Our business is to make Christ King. It is not to achieve for ourselves a high position. It is not even to save a great multitude of souls. It is not even to build up a cherished cause, but it is so to sacrifice and witness that we will hasten the return of our blessed Lord.

It may be hastened. God's times are not wholly regulated by the progress of centuries and the lapse of years, but by spiritual conditions. One generation may live as much as ten that preceded it; and by wise and patriotic energy we may hasten the coming of our Lord in our own lifetime by working for the preparation of His bride and the immediate evangelization of the world. Often in the last few years it has seemed as if the providential conditions of His advent were just about to be fulfilled, and the great political events of the world were converging to the crisis, but something seems to hold, and that one thing is the spiritual preparation and the sanctification of Christ's own people, and the calling out from among the Gentiles of the remnant of His Bride.

Let this be our great object, and thus let us be of one heart to make Jesus King. That is what our world needs. All other plans must fail, all other governments disappoint, all humanitarian, moral, social or political movements end in confusion. The only remedy for all earth's wrongs is Jesus. The only campaign

that will never disappoint its self-denying leaders and martyr followers is the noble campaign of true hearts bound in one ambition to make Jesus King.

And let us not forget that the men who made David king were the men that reigned with him when the kingdom came. The fugitives of the wilderness became the nobles of Israel. The outcasts of Adullam became the aristocracy of Jerusalem. Christ is, as we said at the beginning, calling out not the subjects of His future kingdom but the rulers. The millennium will bring earth's millions to His feet, but these days of testing and of conflict are bringing to Him the tried and faithful ones who are to sit with Him on His throne, and share with Him the government of the millennial age.

CAPTURING THE STRONGHOLDS.

"Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ Jesus." II. Cor. ii. 14; compared with II. Sam. v. 6-10.

THE remarkable passage which forms our text is susceptible of two translations: "Thanks be unto God which always *leadeth* us in triumph," and "Thanks be unto God which always *causeth* us to triumph." Together, they express a profound truth, namely, this: that the conqueror must be first himself subjected, and that it is when we have been led in triumph by our Lord and all our being laid in subjection at His feet that we go forth in turn to be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

This great truth is illustrated in the story of the capture of Jerusalem and the establishment of David's throne in the ancient stronghold of the Jebusites. Its former name was Jebus, the down-trodden. Its permanent name was Jerusalem, the city of peace. Its story is remarkable.

Naturally impregnable by its situation and its defences this ancient citadel had defied the conquests of Joshua, the Judges, and even Saul. David himself had reigned for seven and a half years at Hebron, and still Jebus was in the hands of the enemy. It was held by a little tribe, many of whom were helpless cripples, but they dwelt so secure in their lofty fastness that they defied their more powerful adversaries. And so centuries had passed, the land of promise had been won and the throne of David had been established, and yet the most beautiful and the most important spot in all the land was held by the enemy.

As soon as David, however, was put in possession of the throne of Israel he decided with great wisdom and force to change his capital from Hebron to Jerusalem—the natural centre and metropolis of the land. He offered a splendid bribe to the man who should take it, and Joab was quick to answer the challenge. But so confident were the Jebusites of their absolute security that they laughed to scorn David's peaceful proposition to them to surrender, and they added insult and defiance to their

refusal by suggesting to him that the blind and the lame were all the defenders that they needed. With skillful strategy and heroic bravery, Joab had his men scale the lofty citadel by the way of the aqueducts, it would seem, and soon planted the standard of David on the heights of Zion. David's promise to Joab was redeemed, and he became henceforth the commander-in-chief of the armies of Israel. Moreover, the new citadel was immediately changed into a national capitol. The loftiest height of Zion became the very stronghold of the city and the site of David's splendid palace, and a few years later the neighboring hills were covered with splendid buildings, and ere long the height of Moriah, a little further to the east, was crowned with the Temple of Solomon, the architectural wonder of the ages.

The story of Jebus is full of spiritual lessons, and they are lessons of the deepest solemnity and lessons for the children of God at the most advanced stages of their Christian experiences.

I. The Stronghold of the Enemy.

We see in Jebus the picture of the Christian life where, notwithstanding many a spiritual

blessing and many a real experience, some secret place, some place of pre-eminent importance, is still under the control of self, or sin, or Satan. The land may be subjected, but one critical point is still held by the enemy.

1. It was a feeble enemy. The Jebusites constituted but a little tribe, and they might easily have been expelled had their individual strength been the only thing considered. Their very smallness led them to be perhaps overlooked and despised. They seem to have had a great many cripples among them, for the walls were garrisoned by the blind and the lame. They were rather a contemptible few, and yet they held the strongest position in all the land of promise, and they held it for centuries. Beloved, there are little foes that are working more harm in our Christian life than more formidable adversaries. There are little borers that perforate the vessel's hull unseen, and in an unsuspected moment the ship founders in mid-ocean. There are little insects whose touch is almost impalpable, but whose sting is death. There are little ingredients, one drop of whose corrosive poison will destroy life itself in a

moment. There are little foxes that only destroy the little buds, but with the buds they destroy the fruit and ruin the vines. There are little indulgences and little irritations, and little secret habits, and little dark corners in the heart, where Satan has just hold enough to have a partnership in our life. Like the petty Hindoo land-owner, who held one small lot in a splendid town and refused to sell it to a wealthy millionaire, who had built a palace near by and wanted to own the whole estate. But the little fellow held on to his corner in spite of the most splendid offers, and one day when he met his wealthy neighbor he looked in his face with an inexpressible glance of vindictive triumph and hissed in his ears the words, "Don't forget, please, you and I own this town." All the devil wants is to have his finger in it, and be a partner in the concern with God and you. It gives him a respectability that the world could not confer. He would rather wear a white necktie than an epaulette. He would rather have a pulpit than a politician's seat. He would rather teach theology in a religious seminary than write the biggest novel of the age.

He will let you put ninety-nine parts in the pill and coat it with the finest sugar; only let him insert one grain of arsenic and he is satisfied. Look out for the little Jebusites, and be sure you don't despise the lame ones. There is nothing you so need fear as the harmless habits, as you call them, and which you think you could easily overcome and which you toy with sometimes until they destroy you.

2. An ancient foe. These Jebusites were the descendants of Lot and his degraded daughter. They were born in Sodom, and they retained the awful odor of the slime pits. They represented the natural carnal heart, the things that are born in us, and that come to us by that awful law of heredity which enters so truly into every human life. There are men and women who come into this world under the power of a transmitted curse. It is a frightful thing to be a frivolous, selfish and godless mother, and to transmit your heartlessness and selfishness and deep depravity to the helpless child born of your selfish passion. It is a fearful thing to be an intemperate and brutal father and pass on to another life the frightful disposition

which has made you a blot and a bane to every life which you have touched. Surely, it ought to be enough to live your worthless life without repeating the tragical story in some other existence which cannot help the misfortune of being born with your transmitted wickedness burning like an unquenchable fire in the very veins. It is a sad and bitter thing to inherit from a drunken father the love of alcohol, and to drink in from a mother's breast the duplicity, intrigue and heartlessness of a worldling's life and find yourself with a thousand foes within you to strive for your will and your self-restraint until you are often forced to cry, like one of old, "Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon."

God knows this fight to be true and this principle to be a real moral power, and He has the deepest sympathy for those who come into existence with a birthright of terrible temptation. It is vain and presumptuous for you to think that you can overcome such adversaries. You cannot without the omnipotent grace of God, and even this curse you shall have to overcome as stern as life and death. Recognize at

its full weight the power of your adversary and take God alone for the victory. You have not only an aggravating foe around you, but you have an inveterate enemy within you coiled around your very heartstrings and interwoven with the fibres of your being. It is the race of the Amorite. It is the carnal mind which "is enmity against God and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

3. It was a persistent foe. This tribe of Jebus had stuck to its stronghold for more than five hundred years. Joshua's army had marched about, but the Jebusite still remained. Caleb's heroic followers had captured Hebron, but still the enemy held Jerusalem. The sun stood still on Gibeon and the moon o'er the valley of Ajalon, but the lofty heights of Zion were still securely held by the Amorites. Gideon's hosts swept on in victorious battle, Jephthah's legions drove out the vaster hordes of the neighboring nations, Samson went to and fro with gigantic strides, Jonathan and his armor-bearer smote the Philistines, Saul paced with his victorious armies from stronghold to stronghold and blotted out the whole tribe of

Amalek, and even David was crowned king and had reigned for seven and a half years at Hebron, the type of Christ's victorious reign, and yet there was Jebus with its defiant defenders laughing at them. Oh, how it speaks of some enemy that has hidden away in your heart through years of blessings and victories of grace!

We have been converted, but still it has remained. You have seen yourself and your sin and yielded in sincere consecration and surrendered up to all the light you had, and still that hidden foe was undisturbed. You have received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and Christ has come to reign in the Hebron of your heart, and made it a place of His heavenly fellowship and love, yet yonder, in the depths of your being, there is a place where self and Satan still have enough control to assert themselves when they choose. Perhaps it is a little flash of unconquered temper. Perhaps it is a little bit of the world still cherished. Perhaps it is a secret bitterness if not a forbidden love. Perhaps it is a friendship that God does not control. Perhaps it is a secret indulgence that

you think as trifling as the blind and the lame of Jebus. Perhaps it is a habit that you have justified or ignored. Perhaps it is your cigar or your snuff-box, or your novel, or your love of music, art or the theatre. Perhaps it is your sickness, which you fondly cherish as an angel of light, and put the blind and the lame on your fortifications as the defenders of your santification, and tell how much these things do to keep you humble and holy. Perhaps it is a little cherished misery or morbidness, just the faint right to pity yourself and feel bad sometimes; a little Jebusite just enough for Satan to say, "Now, mind that you and I own this life."

4. An important foe. The worst of all is that this subtle foe is usually enthroned in the most important centre of our life. The Jebusites held the best position in the land. It was the very spot that God wanted for His capitol. And so the thing which Satan seizes is always the best thing; and the place where self sits down is always the very throne of the heart. The devil does not want the offscourings of society. It is the noble, the beautiful, the

gifted, the highborn, the men and women that should have been the very princes of the kingdom of heaven, that he selects as the instruments of his destructive sway, and the part of your being that he seeks to control is always the strategetic point. It is your heart that he is aiming for, it is the singleness of your purpose toward God. It is your very spirituality that he will seek, and as an angel of light if he can sit down in the very secret of your being, and make you serve him while you think you are doing God's very will, he is satisfied. It is Jerusalem that he uses for his reign. God helps us to understand him, to expose him, to expel him, and, like David, to make his seat the very throne of heaven and the very glory of our after life.

Do not say, "I am not saved." "I am not sanctified, because I have discovered this thing still within my heart." I have been saved, I am utterly surrendered, but I have not known all the depths of Satan and the disguises of sin, but as I enter into the deeper light and larger opportunities I will have all "that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

II. The Victory.

1. A brave, victorious struggle. It was not an easy conflict. The height of Zion stands three hundred feet above the valley of Hinnom, and up that cliff they had to climb and scale those rocks before they could drive out the enemy. And it is not easy for us to fight the good fight of faith, and refuse the insinuating wiles of self and Satan. Many a bitter tear, many a night of agony may have to intervene, and he who is not brave enough to suffer and to say "No" to himself can never enter into the heights of Zion and sit on the throne of David. "He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city." God help us to be brave enough to conquer self and to sit down with Christ upon His throne.

2. A wise conflict. It needs more than courage to win this conflict. We have the evidence of the deepest strategy as well as courage in the assault of Joab. David himself suggested the plan of the attack. It was to be by way of the "gutters." These gutters seem to mean the water-courses or the aqueducts by which the city was supplied across the valley

of the south, from the fountains on the heights of Bethlehem. But through these water-courses Joab's men seem to have somehow waded or climbed, and then entered the unsuspecting city, carrying all before them. This suggests, too, not unnaturally, that we, too, must win our fight by holy wisdom. We are not strong enough to overcome our spiritual foes, but there is a way by which we, too, may climb through the water-courses and accomplish by Divine power what we ourselves are unequal to. Water is always the symbol of the Holy Ghost, and it is the Spirit that lifts up the standard when the enemy comes in like a flood. There is a heavenly stream into which we may plunge, and it will bear us through the difficulties and over the obstacles that we never can surmount.

A traveller tells a little incident which perhaps is in keeping with this thought and may illustrate this lesson. A little party descending one of the glaciers above the valley Chamouni, in Switzerland, suddenly found that the pass was closed by a heavy accumulation of ice and snow, and they could go no farther down. It

was too late to go back, for the night was on, and it seemed at first that they must perish. But the guide looked carefully and noticed that the little stream, which they had been following, cut a channel in the ice, and he could hear it thundering on the other side of the mountain, as it fell into the valley below. In a moment his resolution was made, and, bidding his companion follow him, plunged into the current and was followed by his dazed but obedient fellow-traveller. There was a sudden shock, a rush of waters, a moment of darkness, a strange terror and then a blaze of light, and they were thrown out on the other side of the mountain on the green, smooth bank of the little river in the valley of Chamouni. They had trusted themselves to the water-course, and it had carried them through all their obstacles and difficulties.

Beloved, there are times when we fight in vain against our barriers and against our foes. There is a better way. Turn from self and Satan and everything inward and turn upward to Him, receive the Holy Ghost, commit your way to God, wait on Him, be filled with the

Spirit, plunge into the water-course, the current of God's mighty life and love, and you will forget your foes, you will forget yourself, and you will find yourself filled with God and lifted high above all your enemies and all your trials. Plunge into the water-course and let God make you "more than conqueror."

III. The Glorious Recompense.

There are two splendid results that followed this victory; the first was Joab's leadership over the armies of Israel, and all the victories that afterward followed. And so when we win the complete victory over ourselves we shall henceforth become conquerors, too, and a life of triumph shall surely follow. Led in triumph we shall always triumph. Oh, beloved, the reason you are always failing is because you have not allowed God to overcome in the supreme test of your life.

The second result was the establishment of the city of Jerusalem as the throne of David, and, later, the throne of God; for this is God's chosen city. It is not only the capital of Israel, but it is the city of the great King, and in the coming days it is to be the centre of the earth,

and perhaps in the same sense, the metropolis of the universe. And so when we let God overcome and win for us the victory of our lives in the hardest place, God chooses that place and sets His heart upon it, and loves it and honors it and uses it. And so the men and women that have dared to be true, and that, in the supreme test of their lives, have yielded and died to self and become God's bond slaves, God's conquered ones, and God's conquering ones.

Beloved, what is the lesson for your life? Is there still some hidden thing, some unconquered place, some refuge of the enemy tolerated in the kingdom of your heart? God help you to see it, and to meet the issue as David did of old.

And so it comes to pass that we sometimes see a life, that has seemed to be right and even eminently useful, at length go down like some noble ship at sea, and many have wondered and stood in awe. Ah, it was because there was a Jebus that had been left in the hands of the enemy, and in an unguarded hour the hidden foe arose and overcame the heart that had dwelt at ease.

And so, on the other hand, it comes to pass, that we see a life that has gone on in comparative failure, and with little promise of strength or nobility, suddenly rise to the loftiest heights of heroism and spiritual power, and become the glory and inspiration of some great movement; and we wonder, but when the secret is disclosed, it will be found that it is the old story of Jebus, that the heart had found its secret foe, had risen as David rose against the Jebusites, had expelled the lingering enemy, and had turned the place of subjection into the place of triumph.

Oh, shall some one who reads these lines awake to righteousness today, and from this moment rise to be a conquered one and then a conqueror through Him that loved us, and always to be led in triumph?

GUIDANCE AND VICTORY.

"Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

"Take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand."

Ephesians vi. 11 and 13, compared with II. Samuel v. 17-25.

THERE is an old couplet full of deep instruction and suggestiveness which runs as follows:

"If conquered, for tomorrow's fight prepare,
If conqueror, of tomorrow's fight beware."

This is finely illustrated in the life of David referred to in the above passage. He had just achieved the most splendid victory of his life, and secure in the fastness of Zion he might well defy, if any ever might, the threatenings of his foes, and might indeed be tempted to imagine that indeed his conflicts were over. But this superb victory was immediately followed by some of the severest tests and, as we look at the picture, we are reminded for ourselves that the very time to expect temptation

is in the hour of triumph, and that there are many deep lessons to be learned every step of our pathway if we would escape the wiles of the devil and stand at last, having done all.

I. We see an example of temptation after victory. "When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel all the Philistines came to seek David." It was when they heard that he was crowned that they came to take him. It is when God has signally blessed us and sealed us by His Holy Spirit's power that the adversary always seeks to assail us. He feels it is his crisis hour and he must challenge our high position and drive us back from the advanced ground or his control over our lives will be lost. Therefore, it happens after we enter upon the highest blessing we are always exposed to the fiercest conflict. The new convert expecting to find a life of delightful freedom from the things that have assailed his life, is plunged into the severest testings. The newly consecrated life, glowing with high hope and holy purpose, finds itself confronted by the most subtle forms of strange temptation, and the first impulse is to

become discouraged and to feel a touch of bitter disappointment. The real truth is we never feel temptation until we resist it. The man who is following his natural bent is unconscious of any opposing current, and his life is one of passive peace, but when we meet with the fires of evil within us and the adversary beside us, then we understand a little of what the apostle means when he speaks of withstanding in the evil day. It seems at such times as if all the Philistines had come up against us, and there was not a temptation in the category of evil which had not tried its hand upon our encompassed spirit. Let us not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try us as though some strange thing happened unto us, but let us remember Him who, after the baptism at the Jordan, was immediately led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, and let us rejoice inasmuch as we are partakers of the sufferings of Christ that when His glory shall be revealed we may be glad also with exceeding joy.

II. We see an example of prudence in meeting temptation. When David heard that the

Philistines had come up against him we read that he went down into the hold. Doubtless that means the stronghold of Zion, which may have been at a little lower level on the height than his palace and his headquarters. He immediately took refuge in the fort. He did not rashly and impulsively dash into battle without Divine direction, but he took refuge in the hiding-place that God had afforded him. He went down to a lower level of humility and safety, and he waited for Divine instruction. When the enemy comes the truly wise and brave spiritual soldier will always go down into the hold. He will humble himself at the Master's feet. He will take refuge behind the defences which God has provided him, and he will wait for orders from on high. There is no real courage in making light of danger, and the wise soldier of the cross knows that he is no match for Satan. God will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but let us not forget what is added: He will also with the temptation make a way to escape. It is often a way of escape rather than a way of attack, and when God has given us our defences

let us quickly hide behind them and find refuge for our helplessness, like the little conies, in the shelter of the rock.

III. Next we have an example of implicit dependence upon Divine guidance. David inquired of the Lord. He was a trained soldier and a skillful strategist, but he did not trust his skill or strength, but went like a little child to his God and asked immediate counsel. It is very remarkable to notice the form in which he asked counsel. He did not first ask if He should be successful, but he first asked what the Lord wanted him to do. His primary desire was to please God; his second request, to know what God was going to do for him. This is very beautiful and very important. It is much more natural for us to say, "Lord, will you bless me in this?" and then if He promises us prosperity we are disposed to accept His direction and go forward in it. David's attitude was far more single and sincere. With him the supreme question was, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and quite subordinate to that was the other, "Lord, what wilt Thou do with me?" There are instances where

God bids us go forward when it is to face suffering, self-denial and, it may be, even death. It was there that the spirit of the Hebrew witnesses came out so clearly in ancient Babylon, "If it be so, our God is able to deliver us out of the burning fiery furnace, but if not we will not worship thy gods nor the golden image which thou hast set up." Let us only be sure of the path of duty, and then we can confidently ask the Lord to take care of us. And so God gave David both assurances. First, He told him what to do, and then He promised him absolute and certain victory. Oh, how safe it is to go forward with God's assurance! Nothing can daunt us, nothing defeat us.

IV. We see an example of modest and becoming acknowledgment of God as the source of victory. When the Philistines were defeated and scattered before the power of God and the onset of David, he did not, like Saul, set up a pillar of personal celebration, but he commemorated the praise and honor of God alone and gave Him all the glory. "The Lord," he said, "hath broken forth upon mine enemies as the breaking forth of waters." We are not told

anything about the spoil that he took, but we are very distinctly told that he destroyed the images of the Philistines. It was a holy war, and David was much more concerned to destroy the enemies of God than to secure his own trophies of victory.

V. We see an example of repeated temptation on the very same lines. It was not very long before the Philistines came up again into the same valley. This time, no doubt, they came with greatly augmented forces, and determined that they should avenge themselves upon their enemy and recover their lost prestige.

The spiritual lesson here is very important. God sometimes suffers us to be tempted over again on exactly the same lines, even where we have had complete victory before. It may be the devil wants to surprise us through our very security, as we are less likely to expect him to repeat his attack. It may be that God wants to teach us, as in the present instance, some new lesson. It often is because we have not quite triumphed on this line before, and God is good enough to give us a second opportunity.

Let us never be too sure of the subjugation of our Philistine foes, but let us ever watch and be ready.

VI. We see the same temptation met in an entirely different way. This was the great lesson that God was seeking to teach David and us also. Our danger is when a similar experience comes to go on by the force of habit on the same lines, and thus really be trusting unconsciously in our own experience and wisdom. David was graciously delivered from this. It would have been perfectly natural for him to say, "I have defeated these Philistines here before, and I have only to do as I did then and I shall defeat them again." But David, with great wisdom and simplicity, went straight to God, as though he had had no experience and possessed no wisdom of his own, and he was rewarded by receiving an entirely different direction. "Thou shalt not go up against them," said the oracle, "but fetch a compass behind them and come upon them over against the mulberry trees." God had an entirely different lesson this time, and David was wise enough to be open to receive it. There are times when

we are not to face the foe, but to seem to retreat from the foe and let God fight our battle for us. A retreat is often a flank movement and a more certain victory. There are people who attack us that we can better answer by leaving alone. There are things that are said against us that can be most strongly met by silence. There are inward conflicts, which, the more we think about, the more we provoke, and the best way is to turn from the conflict and be occupied with God.

But the great lesson is that of listening, hearkening and obeying. We may often begin a good thing with God and end with ourselves, and there is failure. And so David clung close to God all the way through, and waited every moment for His direction in the minutest details.

VII. We have an example of God's manifest interposition in the trials and conflicts of His children. There is a very sublime picture given in this incident of the unseen forces that are in alliance with God's faithful and obedient children. The Hebrew language, in which the march of these heavenly hosts is described, is

exceedingly sublime. "It shall be when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees thou shalt bestir thyself, for then shall the Lord go out before thee to smite the hosts of the Philistines." In the original the style is dramatic and majestic, and it suggests the march of mighty armies in the air. The rustling of those leaves was caused by no passing breeze, but David knew that myriads of angels and chariots of fire were sweeping down the fields of air, and that his little army was just following in the train of the legions of the sky. All he had to do was to wait for the signal to advance. But he must wait. A premature step would have been an error, and perhaps a fatal blunder.

During the battle of Waterloo, Wellington posted a brave detachment of British troops on a salient point of the field, and their orders were to stand firm and hold the point at all hazards. Again and again through that awful battle they had opportunity to charge upon the foe, and again and again their leader sent an orderly to the headquarters of Wellington to ask permission to charge, but again and again

he sent back the answer, "Stand firm." One by one the little band slowly fell without being permitted to make that charge for which they were so eager, and at last the messenger left the Duke of Wellington with the words, "You will find us all there." When the battle was over they lay in a heap slain, but they had proved a living wall against the foe. That point was the key to the situation. The secret of victory was to wait and obey orders.

And so our heavenly Master bids us wait as well as go. "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high," is essential to all true success when we do go forward. We are to wait for "the sound of a going," not on earth, but in the air, the moving of the breath of the Holy Ghost. It is hard to explain to any dull spirit what this means. There are lives that, like the dull-eyed ox, never catch a gleam of the light from the heavens, but see only the pasture field and fodder trough. There are others that are open to the voices that all cannot hear and visions which many never see. I do not mean the trance vision of the fanatic, but the deep spiritual impulses and

elevations which God still gives to sensitive hearts and quickened ears and eyes. They come to us when the Holy Ghost is pressing down upon our hearts with the baptism of power. They come to us when we have gone through the hour of trial, and our heart is bursting for some message from our Father to comfort and inspire. They come to us in the crisis time of life, when everything around is dark and difficult. They come to us in the providences of God when strange things lie in life's pathway and the heart instinctively responds, "It is the Lord." They are coming to us in the signs of our times, in the wonderful movements of our day, in the providences of God among the nations, in the shaking of the kingdoms of the earth and the harbingers of the coming of Christ. Oh, surely, there is a "sound of a going" in the earth and air and sky. God give us eyes to see and ears to hear and an understanding of our times!

VIII. There is one more lesson of supreme importance, namely, the necessity of our co-operation with God when He begins to move. There was something for David to do as well as

God, and that was to bestir himself when he heard the sound of a going. God's work did not displace David's, but it only led up to it; and it required that David should be the more alert and prompt to follow it up with intense activity and holy courage. There is a time to tarry, but there is a time to go out, and the men that have best learned to tarry know best how to go. Christian life is no dream, no listless, sentimental waiting for something to happen, but it is the posture of hearkening until we hear His voice, and then it is the attitude of intense obedience, alacrity and holy activity in fulfilling our great commission, and making the most of the divine opportunity and the infinite resources which heaven has placed at our command. There is a sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees. Let us bestir ourselves. It is a time of marvellous opportunity in Christian life and Christian work and the world's evangelization. God teach us to tarry in Jerusalem until we are endued with power from on high. God enable us then to go in the power of the Spirit and disciple all nations, and so haste the coming of the Lord.

THE ARK IN ZION.

"Arise, oh Lord, into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy strength." Psalm ciii. 8, compared with II. Sam. vi. 1-23.

AFTER the capture of Jebus and the establishment of the national capital at Jerusalem, David's next great public act was to remove the ark of the covenant from its resting-place on the heights of Abinadab to its permanent abode in Zion. This was an act of great significance, expressing in the most emphatic manner the covenant of God, of whose presence the ark was the especial symbol, as the Sovereign of His theocratic people.

Its removal was accompanied by the most stately ceremonies. The king himself, with his courtiers and ecclesiastical officers, went down to Gibeah and accompanied the ark on its journey. They seem to have overlooked the special command of God in the Levitical law, that the ark should be carried only by the Levites, but they put it upon a cart borne by oxen, and on

the way the oxen shook it so that Uzzah, one of the sons of Abinadab, in attempting to steady it touched it with his hands, and was suddenly stricken down by the hand of God for his presumption.

This so appalled the king and his attendants that they left the ark for a time in the house of Obed-edom, but three months later, learning that God, instead of letting it be a curse, had made it a blessing to Obed-edom and his house, David renewed the attempt, and, with imposing ceremonies, the ark was finally transferred to Jerusalem. David participated in the dances with unreserved joy and ecstacy in the public procession, disgusting his wife, Michal, and bringing upon himself her scorn and rebuke.

Some of the finest Psalms were composed in connection with this event, and sung in the responsive service connected with the ascension of the ark. One of these is the 24th Psalm, where the two choirs of priests sing in response:

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.

"Who is this King of Glory? The Lord

strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.

"Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory."

Another of the ascension Psalms is the 15th. "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?" Still another is the 132d, expressing in the sublimest poetry the joy of David's heart when he is permitted to "find out a habitation for the Lord, the Mighty One of Jacob." As they ascend the heights of Zion they sing, "We will go into His tabernacle, we will worship at His footstool," and the chorus resounds, "Oh, Lord, enter into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy strength. Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness and Thy saints shout for joy." And then from a responsive choir comes the answer, "This is my rest forever. Here will I dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision, I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation and her saints shall shout aloud for joy."

The 68th Psalm is also connected with this occasion. It commences with the old glorious shout of the wilderness which they used to sing when the ark began to move, "Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered," and it rises with the ascending ark to the elevated prophetic height of Christ's ascension until the seer beholds in the distance the chariots of the angels that attended the ascent from Mount Olivet to heaven. "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive, Thou has received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

But let us pass from the historical circumstances to the spiritual significance of this scene.

I. The significance of the ark itself. It was the most significant of all the symbols of the Jewish ceremonial system.

1. It expressed as no other object in all the Mosaic ritual the first principle of the blood—reconciliation to God through the atoning blood. It was a little chest of precious wood covered with gold, and containing the tables of the law and some sacred memorials from the

wilderness, and its lid or cover of solid gold was called the mercy seat or propitiation, and was the especial symbol of the atonement. It was always covered with blood, and was peculiarly fitted to suggest the idea of the covering of human guilt by the vicarious sufferings of Christ. Underneath that cover of gold lay the broken law in the ark. Above shone the Shekinah, representing the face of God. Looking down upon the ark, that broken law, the witness of man's transgression, was covered and hidden by the mercy seat and the sprinkled blood, and God saw not the iniquities of His people, but the sacrifice of His beloved Son. This is the idea of propitiation. It is expressed in the 32d Psalm, "Blessed is he whose sin is covered." It was finely expressed in the prayer of the penitent, "God be," not merciful, but "God be the propitiation for me, the sinner." It is expressed more perfectly still by the apostle John in the simple evangelical statement, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

2. The ark expressed the idea of sanctification. That ark was the type of Jesus Christ,

and it was the sacred depository of the law of God. The first time the law was given at Sinai and the tables were committed to the hands of Moses, as we read in the narrative, he let them fall upon the rocks as he descended from the mount, and they were broken in his hand. This was no mere accident, but it was the sad symbol of the broken law which man had already shattered by his transgressions. The second time that law was given by God on Mount Horeb and written on new tables of stone, but this time He did not commit them to Moses to keep, but He commanded them to be put in the ark and there preserved. The ark, therefore, was the repository of the law. In this it is a perfect type of Christ, our Sanctifier. God gave us His law the first time and we broke it. He does not now in our sanctification trust us with it, for we should break it again; but Jesus keeps it for us, and keeps it in us. We receive Him into our hearts as an indwelling Presence, as our holy Ark, and in His heart that law is hidden and kept; and He, keeping it in us as once He kept it for us, becomes our sanctification. And so it becomes true, "What the law could

not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

3. The ark also signifies God's dwelling in the midst of Israel. It represents not merely the blessings of salvation and sanctification, but the supreme blessing of God Himself, the glory and strength of Israel and of His people. It means that we have God in His personal Presence, and in His infinite all-sufficiency to be our all in all. There were several occasions in the history of Israel when the ark came signally to the front. One of these was when Moses had invited Hobab to be their guide through the wilderness, adding: "Thou shalt be to us instead of eyes." In the very first place we are told that the ark of the covenant removed and went before them to seek out a dwelling-place for them. God was thus emphatically teaching them that He was to be their God, and that no man could be instead of eyes to the people to whom He says, "I will guide thee with MINE eye."

Again, when they crossed the Jordan the ark went before them, and as the feet of the priests that bore it touched the waters they rolled aside and made a pathway for the people to go over, but when they came to the middle of the stream to the deepest and most dangerous place, then the ark paused in midstream and waited in the depths of the Jordan until all the hosts had clean passed over, beautifully setting forth the precious truth that Christ not only goes before us, but holds for us the hardest place and sees us through in the darkest and most dangerous crisis.

II. The removal of the ark to the very citadel of the nation and the throne of Israel was an act of great significance.

1. It recognized the fact that God Himself was King over Israel. They were seeking out a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. They were installing their Theocratic King on His own throne. It was the inauguration of Theocracy on a public and permanent basis, and the handing over of the sceptre to their heavenly King in the most solemn and impressive manner.

2. It was a type of Christ's ascension to the right hand of God, and, therefore, in the 68th Psalm, the thought of the prophet sweeps forward to the glorious hour when He led captivity captive and ascended on high, taking possession in behalf of His people, not only of the throne of earth, but of the throne of the universe.

3. It represented the enthronement of Christ in the human heart. It is rather striking that this did not take place until after Jebus was taken from the hands of the Canaanites and the last relic of the ancient foe was cast out. And so the full enthronement of the Lord Jesus Christ in the human soul must be preceded by a surrender of the last remnant of the life of self and sin. Not only so, there had to be a time of testing. The Philistines came up against David even after the fall of Jebus, and they were driven back and David proved that God was Israel's Almighty King. And so the full government of Christ in the human heart comes after seasons of testing and proving. The baptism of the Spirit came to Jesus on the banks of the Jordan, but it had to be followed by the forty days in the wilderness before the

fullness of the power was manifested. We receive the Holy Ghost at the moment of surrender, but we do not realize the fullness of His power until we have been fully tested and stood triumphant with Him in the conflict with evil. There are stages in the manifestation of God's presence and power in the human soul long after the crisis of a spiritual life is passed, and the wise and watchful disciple will be ever pressing on from strength to strength, proving not only that good and acceptable but also the perfect will of God.

III. The Blessing and the Curse brought by the ark. We read in this chapter of both a blessing and a curse. It was a blessing to the house of Obed-edom, and the presence of Christ is the supreme blessing of a nation, a church, a home and a human life.

But there was a curse as well as a blessing. It was in this chapter we read of the folly and fault of man and the judgment of God. The first was the presumption of Uzzah, for which he was stricken with death, because he tried to steady the ark of God. The next was the blight that fell upon Michal, the wife of David,

because, with selfish and proud indifference, she looked with scorn upon the full and holy joy of the king, and felt no sympathy with the enthusiasm of this glorious hour. She was smitten with a withering curse that left her a barren and fruitless branch in the house of Israel. Both of them are fitted to teach us solemn and profitable lessons.

The story of Uzzah leaves one brief and epigramatic message to all the ages, "Hands off!" It tells us there are some things that we must not attempt to do, even with the best of motives and the most earnest, honest purpose. Uzzah, no doubt, felt that the ark was in danger, and that it was right for him to steady it; but it was none of his business. It was an interference with God's work for which others were appointed, and his best service was to do nothing but the simple task that had been committed to him—to drive the oxen, and let God take care of His own ark. We, too, must keep our hands off God's cause when it is not our business to interfere.

There are many people who spend their lives trying to keep things straight, and they often

get killed, like Uzzah, for their interference. Perhaps God does not always want things straight according to our standards of straightness. God has not only made straight sunbeams, but He has made zigzag lightnings. God has not only Moses and Aaron to prophesy in regular form, but an Eldad and Medad to speak out of time and out of season. God often in His work raises up special geniuses and irregular methods, and in trying to steady them we may destroy the work of God. Very wise was the counsel of Gamaliel, "If this work be of man it will come to naught, but if it be of God let us take heed, lest haply we be found even to fight against God."

We must keep our hands off other people. We must simply let our brother alone, and remember that "to his own Master he standeth or falleth." Miriam, in trying to regulate matrimonial affairs for Moses, God struck with leprosy, and many a man or woman has been withered for life spiritually because of interference, unkindly criticism, personal animosity, jealousy and bitterness.

There are many things in life we must keep

our hands off—cares and worries. Nine-tenths of our troubles are troubles that never come. We get into all our hard temptations by touching things that we had better leave alone. A wise Christian will spend much of his life like a good, well-pitched roof, shedding things and letting them roll off into the gutter and go into the sewer. Others spend their lives as gutters and sewers, catching all the devil's rain and all the dirty water that his emissaries are so ready to throw out, and passing it on until their own lives become rusted, defiled and polluted.

There are really very few things in the course of a day that we need to think about, and if we should confine ourselves to the actual realities of life we should find it possible to live well and to accomplish all life's real work. There are innumerable worries, annoyances, anxieties, cares, troubles and fears that we can simply let alone. Refuse to think about them. Leave them to God. Hands off!

A Christian woman who had been living a very unhappy life, and was always overwhelmed with burdens and with cares of the future, came down stairs one morning telling her family that

she had had a beautiful dream, and that through it God had delivered her from all her fears and worries. She said she had seen a great crowd of people passing along a broad way, and weighed down by innumerable burdens they were carrying. To and fro in the crowd a lot of imps were passing, throwing these burdens all around, and getting the people to pick them up and carry them. Among others she was carrying several of these loads of lead, and was almost worn to death. Suddenly, in the crowd she saw the face of the Lord coming toward her, and she eagerly beckoned for Him to come and help her carry her burden. He looked sternly at her and refused to touch it. He said: "I have no strength for that. I have no grace for loads like this. That is not My burden you are bearing. It is one of the devil's bundles, and all you have got to do is to drop it and you will have plenty of strength for the loads that I bid you carry." It was a revelation to her. She simply dropped the little black bundles, and instantly it seemed that she was winged with strength and gladness, while the Master looked in her face with inexpressible

love and said: "Be careful for nothing . . . and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your mind and heart through Jesus Christ."

. Once more, when we commit our way to God we must keep our hands off. We must let the Lord lead and work. Even though we may not understand His way, we must still trust. Even though all may seem to be going to ruin, we must still believe that all will be well. We must learn the lesson that David has inscribed in the 37th Psalm, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him and He worketh," and then we must add, "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him." Anxiety is as much forbidden as stealing. Worry is as wicked as worldliness. In the same breath in which He says, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," the Lord Jesus also says, "Therefore, I say unto you, take no thought of your life."

Now these sins are greatly aggravated in a life of consecration and dedication to God. It is not so strange that the world should worry, that people who know not their God should be continually struggling for themselves and fight-

ing their own weary battles, but it is a dreadful thing for the child of God to commit his way to his Heavenly Father, to confess his confidence in His power and love, and then to worry and fret and act as worldlings do. It is a shameful dishonor to Christ, and it is an aggravated sin by the very fact of our having received the Holy Ghost. It would have been little harm for Uzzah to have steadied his cart had the oxen been bearing a load to market, but it was a very awful thing for him to do so when the living God was in the midst of the burden that he was bearing. It is a very dreadful thing for one in whose bosom the Son of God is enthroned to be fretting and flurrying like the people who know not God. There is a fine story told of an old auntie in the South, who saw a young disciple who had just received the Holy Ghost acting in some foolish and inconsistent way, "Go softly, honey," she said, "go softly; mind, you are carrying the Holy Child in your arms." Let us go softly, because we bear the mark of God, and in our bosom is enthroned that awful Presence before whom angels bow and veil their faces with their wings.

MEPHIBOSHETH, OR MERCY MEETING MISERY.

"When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Rom. v. 6, 10, compared with II. Sam. ix. 1. "And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

DAVID had now become established upon the throne, and had extended his empire far and wide by numerous conquests, until his realm extended from the Mediterannean to the Euphrates, and covered all the region that God had promised in His covenant with Abraham as the inheritance of Israel. Not only so, he had recognized his Jehovah as the true Sovereign of Israel, and installed the sacred ark in the tabernacle in Zion as a symbol of Jehovah's presence and sovereignty over all the kingdom. Israel was a true theocracy, and David was only a vice-regent of a greater King.

His business, therefore, was to represent Jehovah in all his works and in all his ways. This gave a high and holy dignity to his person, and a lofty incentive and inspiration to his life. As the representative of Jehovah, and as the great type of the coming Messiah, it became him to walk with a perfect heart, and to show forth in his life the attributes and character of the God he represented. This is indeed the true motive of Christian living. It is only as we stand in the name and stead of Christ, and endeavor to live as those who are called to show forth the character of our great Example and Head, that we should be lifted above the selfishness and sinfulness of fallen humanity and enabled to walk worthy of our high calling.

David, instead of setting an example of royal arrogance and selfishness, felt it encumbent upon him to be a pattern of lowliness, righteousness and mercy. And so, as soon as his throne was established he began to look about him for objects upon whom he could bestow his kindness. He did not wait for the need to present itself, but he was seeking for an object upon which to pour out his own beneficence and love.

It is one thing for us to respond to the appeal of charity when it comes to us, and it is quite another thing for us to be looking about for objects for our beneficence. This is Godlike. God did not wait until man came supplicating at His feet, but the Father sought the wandering prodigal and before Adam ever asked for mercy we hear the pleading of His voice amid the trees of the garden, calling, "Adam, where art thou?" And so we find David asking with beautiful benignity, "Is there any that is left of the house of Saul that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

In this, David was an example of loftier kindness—even the mercy of that Heavenly Father who is ever seeking as well as saving the lost and waiting to be gracious. We have a beautiful example, in this incident, of the mercy of God and the abundant grace which, for Jesus' sake, He vouchsafes to the most hapless and miserable of sinful men.

I. The picture of the sinner's condition.

1. Mephibosheth was a true illustration of the sinner's curse. He was under the shadow of the house of Saul. He was born of a family

whose head had left an inheritance of sorrow to all his seed. Saul's sins had ruined his house, and slain all his children but this poor cripple, in consequence of his follies and crimes. And poor Mephibosheth had been spared only because he wasn't worth killing. This is our lost condition by nature. We are born in the world with an inherited curse. We may argue and criticize as we please the doctrine of the fall, but the stern fact remains today patent to every observer that men still inherit in the present life the sins of their ancestors. The pagan father bequeaths his blindness, superstition and degradation to his children. A drunken parent transmits to his posterity a heritage of woe, and all the fine-spun arguments of the critic do not prevent the bitter blight of this hereditary curse. Heredity is a fact in the human life today, and how do we know but that it will be a fact in the eternal tomorrow? God's Book tells us it will be. And so poor Mephibosheth inherited the curse of Saul, and the sinner inherits the curse of fallen humanity. "We are all the children of wrath even as others." It is not that God delights in inflicting hereditary

suffering, but it is one of God's own laws, and the only way He can prevent its operation is through the intervention of His mercy, which is now offered to every child of fallen Adam.

2. Mephibosheth was helpless. He was lame in both his feet. He was unable to move without assistance, and he is a vivid type of the helplessness as well as the guilt of our human race. People idly talk about the injustice and cruelty of teaching that the heathen must be lost without the Gospel, and they lightly tell us that God is bound in justice to save all men, irrespective of Christ's atonement, if they do right and live up to the light they have. We are perfectly willing to concede that a just and righteous God will always accept a righteous man, and that if there is a heathen on the face of the earth who has obeyed the light of his conscience he will receive Divine approval. But here the question ends in a pure theory, for the fact remains that there is not a human being on the face of the earth that is able to live up to the light of his conscience without supernatural assistance.

The very essence of man's fall is helplessness.

Like Mephibosheth, he is lame in both his feet, and the cry of the wisest and noblest sages in every age has been, "When I would do good evil is present with me. I know better, but I do not do it. I see the right and hate the wrong, but something attracts me into it all the same. I condemn myself, and yet I do the things which I condemn." Man's supreme need is not mercy to forgive his past sins, but power to take away his sinful nature and make him fit for God's heaven. The only remedy, therefore, for fallen humanity is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost to impart a new nature and to give supernatural assistance to enable us to do the will of God.

3. Mephibosheth was a type of the sinner's worthlessness. As he described his own condition he was but a "dead dog," utterly unworthy of David's generosity. God loves us not because we deserve it, but because He cannot help it. There is something in Him that draws Him to us, not something in us that claims His approval. "For mine own sake," He says, "do I this, not for your sakes, O house of Israel!" Salvation is an act of unmerited mercy, and God

is able to love, to pity, and to choose the things that are despised, and to place a soverign value all His own on souls which might be called even the devil's castaways.

4. Mephibosheth represented the sinner's separation from God. He was living away across Jordan somewhere in the land of Gilead, far from Jerusalem, among strangers, a type of the poor sinner—"an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

II. We see next the picture of the Father's mercy.

The question of David, "Is there any that is left of the house of Saul that I may show him kindness?" is just a revealing of the heart of God and His great mercy to poor, lost, sinful men. But it was not unconditional mercy. It was all "for Jonathan's sake." There are people today who love to make light of the old Gospel of Christ's atonement and the mercy of God through a Mediator. They tell us that the

Father can forgive at His own pleasure and they need no intercessor by whom to approach Him, but can go as the prodigal came to the Father, without any reference to the blood of Calvary or the name of Jesus. These people forget that the parable of the prodigal son is only the last of three parables in the fifteenth chapter of Luke, and that there are two that go before without which the third would be impossible. It is true that the father was waiting to be gracious to his returning son, but we must not forget that before that story could be written it was necessary that the Good Shepherd should go far out into the dark mountains and the cruel night, and suffer bitterly before He could find the lost sheep; and it was necessary that the woman should sweep the house, and seek diligently until she found the treasure. These two parables express the part of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in our salvation, and to open the way for the Father's part in welcoming back the returning son. The Good Shepherd is the Son of Man going all the way to Calvary to find and save us. The seeking woman is the Holy Ghost sweeping our

house and illuminating our dark soul to find the lost treasure. When the Son and the Spirit have done their part then the Father's heart is open, and the Father's way is clear to receive us and bless us. "There is none other name under heaven given among men by which we can be saved but the name of Jesus." You may come and plead for mercy in heaven if you only do it for Jesus' sake. After all the cost of Calvary God will never dishonor nor ignore the dying agony and the precious blood of Jesus Christ, our crucified Redeemer.

III. The picture of God's royal bounty to the returning sinner.

1. David gave back to Mephibosheth all the lands of Saul, restoring his lost inheritance in full. And so God gives us back all that we have forfeited through sin, and it is indeed true

> **"In Him the tribes of Adam boast**
> **More blessings than their father lost."**

2. But this is not all. God also gives us His own royal bounty. Mephibosheth not only received his forfeited inheritance back, but he was accepted as the child of the king and hence-

forth ate at the king's table, and was shown all the hospitality of the royal palace. And so God takes us into His heart and home, and makes us His very sons and daughters, and shares with us all the fullness of His love, grace and glory, saying to us, "Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine." How rich our inheritance as the children of the King! How infinite our resources! How glorious our prospects! How we should dwell on high, above all low and grovelling things, and bear the dignity of princes of heaven, so that men looking upon us shall say once more, "Each of them looked like the children of the king." How unworthy to be living a life of discontent, strife and misery. "All things are ours." Let us live as if we meant it, and translate the old psalm into our shining faces and victorious lives, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over."

IV. The grateful return. Mephibosheth was not unmindful or unworthy of David's generosity.

1. He sets us a beautiful example of humil-

ity. He calls himself a "dead dog," and he really meant it. He expressed what is just as true of every sinner. The only trouble is that we don't quite believe it. There is nothing more useless and contemptible than a dead dog. Other animals are of some use when dead, but a dog is worse than worthless. Well for some of us if we were truly dead dogs. There is a good deal of a live dog about many professing Christians, with all the snarl and strife of savage brutes. What we need and what Christ expects is, that we should take the place of the dead dog and die out forevermore to all our rights and all our pretensions, and get forever out of the way, that Christ may come in with a new life and be forever the substitute of our worthless wretched self. The only secret of a sanctified life is to pass sentence of death on all that belongs to you in your natural and former state and never recall it.

Once there lived another man within me,
Child of earth, of self, of Satan he,
But I've nailed Him to the cross of Jesus,
And that man is nothing now to me.

That is the only place of rest, the only place

of holiness, the only way to find the all-sufficiency of Christ.

Now it is the grace of Christ that brings us there. It is His mercy that slays us. It is when we receive His generous love that we loathe ourselves and want to pass forever out of view. Oh, let us let Him love us to death.

2. Mephibosheth was loyal as well as lowly. True, his loyalty was questioned, and he was greatly slandered by Ziba, his unfaithful servant, who complained to David that Mephibosheth was false. But this made no difference to him. He was not loyal as long as David believed in his loyalty. He was not loyal for the sake of being considered loyal, but he was loyal on principle, loyal for David's sake and his own. It was in him to be loyal, and he could not be disloyal. So loyal indeed was he, that when David came back months later, after his own sad exile, he found that Mephibosheth had been fasting in sackcloth and sorrow all the days of his absence, and nothing could make him happy until the king came back unto his own again.

And when he found that Ziba had ingratiated himself into the favor of David and

cheated him out of his inheritance, he manifested a sublime indifference and answered nobly, "Let him take all, inasmuch as the king has come back to his house in peace." Beautiful spirit of disinterested fidelity and noble unselfishness! unable to enjoy the world until our King has received His inheritance and been requited for His shame and cruel death. Oh, if the followers of Christ were only as true! Oh, if He could but see some of us waiting and watching in grief and sorrow because of His dishonor and His absence! Oh, if we were but as indifferent to the end, and would obey fully, and say, like Mephibosheth, when men take advantage of us, when fortune fails and earthly things go by, Let them go, let them take all, but give me Jesus and my blessed hope and inheritance with Him! Oh, to have such a hope of His coming, such a realization of His kingdom, such a stake in His future reign, such an inheritance laid up with Him, that the world has dropped away from us by the superior attraction of the world to come! This is true loyalty, and this alone is worthy of His grace and the glory in store for us at His return.

SINS AND SORROWS OF DAVID'S REIGN.

"Thou art the man." II. Sam. xii. 7.

WE have been dwelling on the virtues of David's character and the glories of his reign. But suddenly the sky is clouded, and the chain of blessing rudely broken by a series of sins and sorrows that would crush us with discouragement and despair were it not for the infinite grace that shines out in contrast with man's unworthiness.

The Bible makes no attempt to hide the faults and crimes of its favorite characters. It is not given to reveal the virtues of humanity, but the grace of God, and therefore presents a frank and unbiased picture of man at his best, and then on the dark background of human infirmity and sin it spans the rainbow of heavenly mercy and infinite grace. There are lessons which we can only learn through the sad experience of deepest self-revealing, and David had to go down into the depths of failure in order to rise to the heights of grace.

It is needless to dwell on the familiar details of the sad story of David's fall. Let us also learn its lessons.

I. The causes of his failure:

1. The first of these causes was that he was out of his true place. We read in the previous chapter that "At the time when kings go forth to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel, and they destroyed the children of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem." This was his first mistake. He was out of place. He should have been at the front with his brave soldiers. We are always in danger if we are out of God's order. It matters not where we are; even the house of God, even the quiet chamber of rest, is the place of peril, if God has sent us somewhere else.

2. Idleness was the next cause of David's fall. He was unemployed. He was loitering, dallying, drivelling. Luther says, that "while the devil tempts other men, the idle man tempts the devil." Satan always furnishes occupation for the unemployed. He is a busy restless spirit, and he lets no man rest. If labor be the

curse of Eden, surely God has transformed it into a blessing by laying upon fallen man the blessed influence of pre-occupation as a necessity of his existence. The idle, dallying throng are bound to become vicious. There is no greater curse that you can bequeath to your children than to train them up in luxurious idleness, and there is no greater blessing you can give them than to innure them to habits of industry and toil, and teach them to love work. The silly and sinful novel, the game of cards, the convivial debauch, all these are but inventions to pass the time away, to occupy idle hours, and they breed inevitable sin and sorrow.

3. But the direct cause of David's sin was an unholy look. John Bunyan has told us that we must guard eye-gate and ear-gate, or the adversary will soon capture the citadel of our heart. "Turn away mine eyes from viewing vanity," is the wise prayer of this man, who had found out to his bitter cost the wretched consequences of a sinful glance. And his wiser son has crystallized the same lesson into one of his immortal proverbs when he says, "Keep

thine heart above all keeping; for out of it are the issues of life. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left. Remove thy foot from evil."

Sin does not come to us full born. It is nursed by foolish words, worldly scenes, suggestive pictures and unholy glances. The daily Broadway parade is the nursery of thousands of ruined lives. The shop window is a prolific garden of unholy weeds. The purient literature of the book stores, the pink page pictures of vice and debauchery, and the abominable theatrical posters that defile the fences of every vacant lot and stamp our cities as modern Gomorrahs—these are the roots of lust and licentiousness—these are the soft-winged moths that breed the worms that destroy the robe of virtue.

4. Doubtless there are still deeper causes. David's prosperity had doubtless induced a condition of pride and unwatchfulness, and David's inner life had not kept pace with the extraordinary blessings which God had showered upon his outward circumstances. And so it

became necessary that he should be rudely awakened to understand his true spiritual state, and then lifted into a higher, better place.

II. The gradations of David's sin. The apostle has given us the genesis of evil in a very vivid pedigree. "Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." David's sin was true to this pedigree.

1. It began with an unholy passion. The sin of impurity has been so dangerously gilded with the false light of poetry and romance that the world is in danger of forgetting in our day its sordid beastliness and utter degradation. It is the most debasing of all forms of evil, and most surely and swiftly obliterates all moral principle and religious sensibility from the human soul, deadening and hardening the heart until "being past feeling men give themselves over . . . work all uncleanness with greediness." And yet it is today undermining the family life, the social life and the morals of all civilized communities, and reaches its most fearful maturity in nations that are under the influence of culture and prosperity.

A letter was recently addressed to one of our literary journals protesting against Ouida, the famous novelist, on the ground that if her works were to be believed the French people were utterly destitute of the fundamental principles of morality. And yet this same Ouida is the idol of France, and one of the most popular of the writers of fiction even in America today. We have only to read the shocking columns of our daily press to understand how truly our social life is being demoralized by the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. Let us never lower the standard of social purity or lightly esteem the fearful sin which brought upon David and his kingdom the dark shadows that clouded all his future. Passion meets us with a crimson rose and tempting perfume, but behind it is the sting of a thousand thorns and the fetid breath of the pit.

2. The next element in David's sin was falsehood, duplicity and deceit. This form of sin almost always leads to deception, evasion and a double life, until the conscience becomes utterly calloused and men and women are living a lie. One would scarcely think that the simple-

hearted shepherd of Bethlehem was capable of the deep duplicity that first tried to snare Uriah into hiding the crime of the royal usurper of his home, and, failing in this, by the most cunning contrivance using Joab as a tool to push him into the place of peril and cause his cruel death while, at the same time, palming it all off as an accident of war.

David's heart must have been stung to the quick by the letter he got back from the crafty Joab, who had deeply divined the secret of the king, and sent him this word which sounds like the hiss of a serpent: "And if it be so, that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? Then say thou, thy servant, Uriah the Hittite, is dead also." How utterly hypocritical and devilish was the answer that David sent back to his twin hypocrite, Joab: "Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it, and encourage thou him." To such steps of duplicity may the soul step when once it begins

the downward slide of the slimy track of licentiousness and sin.

3. But the dark crime of murder was also added to the sin of David. Bitterly and truly might he cry afterwards, "Cleanse me from blood guiltiness, O God!" Little did it avail him to plead an excuse that it was not his hand that struck Uriah down. Truly and terribly might Nathan answer in the name of the Lord, "Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon." It was the sword of Ammon that slew him, but it was David that slew him all the same.

These two sins of uncleanness and bloodshed so terribly linked in the fall of David are the two sins that are specially held up in the prophetic word as the signs of the last days. "As it was in the days of Lot." This gives us a picture of lust. "As it was in the days of Noah." This is the vision of violence and blood. "So shall it be" in both respects, "in the day when the Son of man shall be revealed." And surely these are the two forms of open

iniquity that in our day are becoming most flagrant and most frequent. Look at the columns of our morning papers steeped in filth and blood, with their stories of divorce, intrigue and murder, increasing from year to year far in advance of the increase of our population and far in excess of any other nation. Indeed, these two sins usually go together. The love that fawns today will flame tomorrow as a devouring fire. And indeed it is true, in the most literal sense, that "lust when it hath conceived bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death."

4. But there is another sense in which death came to David as the fruition of his crime. It was the death of his conscience and the entire suspension of his moral sensibility. It is frightful to see how speedily and how utterly the sensitive, spiritual nature of this man of God was paralyzed and petrified by one brief hour of sin, so that for two long years he seems to have been utterly unconscious of having done wrong, and to have enjoyed the fruits of his shameful conspiracy with absolute impunity, not even shedding a tear over Uriah's noble

sacrifice, but immediately sending for the wife of the man that he had wronged, and establishing her openly and shamelessly as his wife. Indeed, when Nathan told him the story of the ewe lamb he was quick to condemn the cruel conduct of the oppressor in the parable, and it never even occurred to him that he was condemning himself. Surely this is death. Surely the saddest thing that can come to a noble nature is to sink into the depths of iniquity, and become reconciled to the most revolting associations and vices, and even forget what it once was like to be holy and pure. I am very sure that David did not write any psalms during the two years of his profound spiritual catalepsy.

III. The aggravation of David's sin.

1. It was aggravated by the person who sinned. Sin is always sin; but sin is more heinous when it is committed by one of whom we might expect better things. David occupied a pre-eminent position. He had received every kindness from the hand of God. Jehovah might well say to him: "I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the

hand of Saul, and I gave thee thy master's house and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and Judah, and if that had been too little I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in His sight." And so it is true of us. "Unto whom much is given, of them shall much be required." When God has dealt kindly by us and trusted us with a high calling and a glorious work it is a very fearful thing for us to drag His honor in the dust, and degrade ourselves and our sacred trust by disobedience or unfaithfulness.

2. It was aggravated by the one against whom he sinned. It was against a true and noble man, a man who had done him no wrong, a man who trusted in his royal generosity, a man who left his wife's honor in his keeping, a man who refused even the most innocent indulgence because his king and country were in danger, a man who nobly sacrificed his beloved wife and his happy home that he might hasten forth again to the battle-field, who, even when treacherously slain by his king, gladly gave up

his life, believing it to be a worthy sacrifice for his sovereign and his country. Against such a man the sin of David was inhuman, monstrous and utterly inexcusable. Well is it portrayed in the simply-worded parable of the poor man with the one ewe lamb, robbed and wronged by a rich oppressor who had all he needed beside and might well have spared that one treasure. And so our sin is aggravated by the person against whom we sin. It is a very dreadful thing to sin against innocence, purity, goodness, loyalty and holiness. It is a very dreadful thing to harm the children of God, for God is their avenger. It is a more dreadful thing to speak or act an injury against the Lord's anointed. There is many a wrecked life today, many an unhallowed grave, and perhaps many a raving maniac because of words hastily spoken and wrongs wilfully done against the servants of the Lord.

3. It was aggravated by the scandal and blasphemy it brought against the name of the Lord. "By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." This was the severe aggravation of

David's crime, and this always makes the sin of a Christian peculiarly offensive to God. It dishonors Christ and makes Him seem false to a scorning world. God help us to walk humbly and watchfully because we carry about with us the honor of our King!

4. The consequences of David's sin. God graciously forgave him the moment he acknowledged his transgression, but at the same time He put him under a course of severest discipline and chastisement, which lasted for years and covered the remainder of his reign with many a shadow and many a sorrow. We must understand this principle of God's government.

It is not judgment in fierce anger, but it is a wise and loving chastening intended to teach great moral lessons, and lead the subject into a deeper and better place. There are great laws of moral and spiritual cause and effect which make sorrow inevitably follow hard in the tracks of sin. Grace does not abolish these laws, but grace gives us strength to stand the discipline; but we bring the discipline upon ourselves all the same when we sin, and we oft make life much harder than it need have been

had we walked more closely with our God. It is like the decree which Ahasuerus made against the Jews at the instigation of Haman. Afterwards when Esther pleaded, the decree was not annulled, but, instead, the Jews were given power to defend themselves against it. And so when we turn to God there are things which meet us in our lives hard and strange, which God does not always put aside, but He gives us grace and strength to go through the ordeal in victory. He gave this to David; but, oh, how much David might have escaped if he had stood true to God to the end!

Seven great troubles entered into his cup of sorrow. The first was the death of the child born of this unholy passion. The second was the ruin of Tamar, his beautiful daughter, by the crime of Ammon, her half brother. Next was the murder of Ammon by Absalom. Then came the rebellion of Absalom and his cruel death, which broke David's heart. And then came the curse of Shimei, the terrible pestilence that almost blotted out Jerusalem. Last of all came the rebellion of Adonijah, and even the complicity of Joab with him. What a cata-

logue of sorrows—all the brood of that single sin! "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

IV. Mercy triumphing over judgment. Out of all this and above all this comes the "clear shining after the rain," and the marvellous grace of God in the later history of David.

1. There was the deeper life it brought to his soul. It was a life through death. It was in this that he learned, as he tells us in the twenty-third Psalm, to "go through the valley of the shadow of death," and to come out on the other side with a newer, higher life. It was in this experience that he learned the secrets that he has evolved in the fifty-first Psalm, where he can look down into the full depths of his iniquity and say, "My sin is ever before me," and from there he can look up through the blood into the unclouded light of the throne, and say with profound confidence, "Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." Marvellous paradox of faith! The deepest sin the brightest glory. The darkest stain the whitest robe. Crimson and scarlet stains, but whiter than the

snow, and spotless as wool cleansed to its finest fibre. It was in this that he learned in advance of his times the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and could sing, in that penitential Psalm, that wondrous song and prayer: "Renew a right spirit within me. Take not Thine Holy Spirit from me. Uphold me with Thy free Spirit." Henceforth he lived the resurrection life, and he knew the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

2. Not only so, God even transformed the outward circumstances so that the curse at last became a blessing, and the second son of this same Bathsheba was chosen by the Lord to be the heir to his throne. And we read about him this wonderful testimony: "He called his name Solomon, and the Lord loved him, and he sent by the hand of Nathan, the prophet, and called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord."

The lesson it teaches us is this, that if we deeply and thoroughly repent, if we pass judgment unreservedly upon our sinful self, and accept the mercy of God in its fullness and its freeness, we shall not only be forgiven but restored, and some day in yonder world of glory,

of which Solomon was the type, we shall find the curse transformed into a blessing, and "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar a myrtle tree, and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

ABSALOM, OR A BEACON AND A WARNING FOR YOUNG MEN OF TODAY.

"Is the young man Absalom safe?" II. Sam. xviii. 32.

HOW could he be safe! How could any young man be safe with such a character and life as his! Vainglorious, worldly-minded, disobedient and disloyal to his loving father, passionate, vindictive, self-indulgent and shameless in his profligacy, full of duplicity and deceit and utterly destitute of moral principle or real godliness. How could even a father's love save such a boy from inevitable ruin! The only good that such a life can do is to be a beacon upon the shores of danger, warning other men from his terrible mistakes and fearful destruction.

A king and a father sat in the gates of Mahanaim, waiting for tidings from the neighboring battle-field. All day long the fight had raged in the woods of Ephraim, while on one

side Amasa led the hosts of Absalom, the army of the rebellion, and on the other hand Joab commanded the trained veterans of David as they fought for their king and their country against the treacherous legions who gathered to the standard of the usurper. Fierce and long the battle waged, but as the sun began to wane the veterans of David's army prevailed, and the hosts of Absalom began to melt away in retreat and terrible slaughter. Pressing hard in close pursuit Absalom himself was overtaken in the forest, and was found by one of Joab's followers hanging from an oak by his splendid tresses of flowing hair, which had caught in the thicket and suspended him while he was still alive, so that he was helpless to extricate himself. Joab needed no further notice to strike the fatal blow which removed at once the head and cause of the rebellion. With three darts flung by his own hand he pierced the heart of the wretched man, and then left him to his soldiers to cut to pieces and bury under a heap of stones in the wilderness.

When they found that Absalom was dead the pursuit was recalled and the battle ceased.

Then Joab sent a swift courier to bear the tidings to the king. They had with difficulty restrained him from taking part in the battle. Well they knew that his fondness for his foolish boy would probably risk the victory to save his son, and they persuaded him that his life was worth ten thousand and must not be rashly ventured. But he gave them the tenderest charges for the security of Absalom, and waited eagerly to hear the earliest tidings from the field.

As the sun was sinking in the west he looked across the country, and, lo, in the distance a cloud of dust betokened a swift runner. Sweeping forward to the gate of the city came Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, David's friend, and throwing himself upon his face upon the ground he quickly told the story of the victory of David's army. But the king was as though he heard not, and with eager heart he cried, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz's heart was too tender to tell the truth, and so he gently avoided the question. Meanwhile another runner was descried swiftly following the first, and as he came near him shouted out

the story of the triumph, too. But again the king with bursting heart asked the tender question, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Cushi, who was not as thoughtful as the others, but whose only idea was to tell the message in all its meaning, let out the dreadful secret as he answered, "the enemies of my lord, the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is." That answer broke the father's heart. Hurrying to his chamber he burst out in bitter wailing: "Oh, my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, oh, Absalom, my son, my son." His grief was inconsolable, and at last even Joab had to go and remonstrate with him about the dreadful shadow he was throwing upon the hearts of the brave men that had risked their lives to save his life and kingdom. "Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life and the lives of thy sons and thy daughters in that thou lovest thine enemies and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day that thou regardest neither princes nor servants; for this day I perceive that if Absalom had lived,

and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well." This was sufficient to arouse the king from his stupor of agony, and he came back to his palace and rallied the scattering forces who had already begun to steal away. But that weight of sorrow never left his heart, and well might he groan for the foolish boy whose life had gone out that day in darkness and despair, which none better knew in all its meaning than the godly king, who understood better than Absalom the meaning of eternal retribution, whose own hands had written the solemn words, "The redemption of the soul is precious and it ceaseth forever." Let us pause while still we may receive and profit by the warning of this ruined life, and look at the secrets of his failure and the lessons of his terrible example.

I. The first and most predominant feature in Absalom's character was his vanity and self-conceit. His personal appearance was strikingly beautiful. He was the handsomest man in Israel, and from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet there was no blemish in him. This, instead of a blessing, became, as it often

does, a bane and led him to centre his life in himself, and it became conceited, vainglorious and utterly selfish. Personal vanity is weak and sad even in a woman, but in a man it is contemptible. The dude is not worthy the name of man. Beauty loses its charm when the possessor becomes conscious of it. Personal appearance ceases to attract us when the possessor is manifestly aware of it. To spend one's life in making a good appearance, in studying the latest fashions in garments, neckties and society manners, is an occupation too small for an immortal being created to resemble God and to live for high eternal things. Even the Greek language, in the name it chose for man, "anthropes," expresses the idea of a being looking upward, and yet how very far from this idea is the character and manhood of men of today!

Personal conceit, however, is not only silly, but it is dangerous. It is the handmaid of sinful companionship, extravagance, worldliness and godlessness, in all its forms. It led Absalom to ruin, and it is weaving a silken snare for thousands of young lives today.

Absalom's vanity displayed itself in his equipage and style of living. He got himself chariots and runners to run before him and announce that Absalom was coming. He posed as the foremost prince in all the land, and showed his princeliness by his pompous display. This, too, is one of the perils of modern society, to belong to the smartest set, to have the finest equipage, to make the greatest social impression, to give the finest entertainments, balls and receptions, to have the most showy and expensive mansion and style of living, to have the acquaintanceship of the most notable people, to be the guest or host of the kings or queens or princes, all this is the goal to which multitudes to whom God has entrusted beauty, position and wealth, are pressing forward in the silly strife at which angels must blush and smile as they look ahead to the crumbling castles of human pride, to the corruption and the worm that is so soon to take the place of all the splendid pageant of what men call society. How very sad that on a single ball in this metropolis in the past winter enough money was spent to send a thousand missionaries to the

field and stud the crown of Christ with ten thousand immortal jewels in the form of redeemed souls.

But still more sad and terrible, Absalom's vanity did not even stop short of the grave itself, for one of the brightest ambitions of his life was to build a splendid monument in the beautiful valley of the Kedron, known as the King's Dale. And there between Mount Olive and Mount Moriah he reared a beautiful structure, which is known to this day as Absalom's Tomb. But true to the irony of fate he never slept in his beautiful sepulchre. His bones were buried in the woods of Ephraim, and his monument remains to this day as a derision and scorn at which every Jew as he passes by pitches a stone as an expression of his contempt and abhorence. And even this is still repeated among the extravagances and follies of the selfish world. All around us men are spending fortunes on piles of stones that will not make their selfish dust sleep more easily while the poor and hungry are crying for bread and the heathen are dying without the Gospel.

II. Absalom was the slave of selfish and

worldly ambition. His supreme object was to make for himself a splendid position, and attain the very highest place, even the throne itself. For this he unscrupulously risked everything, and at last lost honor and life. He had become intoxicated with the cup of pride. He had become fascinated with the dream of fame. He had set out in the race which multitudes are running still for earthly power and greatness. It is a very sad and usually hopeless struggle, and even when the prize is won it is not worth its cost. What did Bonaparte get for all his victories but a disappointed ambition and a lonely exile and a death without a single ray of hope? What could be more sad than the dying words of Gambetta, the hero of the French Revolution, who, dying in the highest place that the country could give him, left these sad words, "There is no use denying it, everything is lost." How few of the men that have struggled in our own lifetime for political pre-eminence have got anything out of it to pay them for the cost. The men that triumphed for a time as political bosses were turned out at last by successful rivals, and their very names

are soon forgotten. The man who enters the White House at the beginning of a term amid praise and honor steals out of it at the end with none to do him reverence, having disappointed his political friends and won the derision of his enemies, and even failed perhaps to please himself. These are the apparently successful ones, but what of the myriads who fall in the struggle, and lose not only the object of their pursuit but everything else as well as the prize. Young men, you who are starting out in life and choosing your life object, may God save you from the demoralizing and disappointing struggle for political pre-eminence and worldly honor. With all its perils and risks even the strife for wealth is less degrading. No man can be safe in such a contest. He is bound to compromise with evil. He is surely to be associated with ungodly men. He must trample under his feet God's holy day as he holds himself at the bidding of political caucuses and the calls of politicians. Honor, principle and godliness must often be sacrificed, and it will be a great miracle of grace if he shall not miss winning the whole world and at the same time lose

his own soul. There is a better ambition. There is a safer hope. There is a nobler aspiration. There are crowns and kingdoms to be won by the sacrifice of self and sin. Let us nobly enter for these high contests and let the world go by.

III. Absalom was a man of passion. His passion was of two kinds, as it usually is. It manifested itself first in the form of vindictiveness and retaliation, and afterward in a shameless disregard of morality and purity in the sight of all the land. The first outbreak of his overstrained nature was the murder of Amnon, his own half-brother, because of the cruel wrong he had done to Absalom's sister, Tamar. There was something natural and perhaps chivalrous in the indignation of Absalom at this abominable crime, but there was a better way to deal with it. Absalom's course was bloody and treacherous. Let us not forget that the blood we shed will come back to us and demand our own. "He that sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed." "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword." Violence and self-avenging are altogether wrong, and the

high-spirited young men of our day who delight in these things will find in the end that there is a Nemesis of retribution that follows surely the bloody track of the murderer to the bitter end. But Absalom stepped to deeper depths of indulgence and crime when he openly debauched the very household of his venerable father, and in the sight of all the city and in the very light of the sun dishonoring both himself and his father's name by the most shameful of open excesses. It may be said that he did this thing as an act of policy, and did it at the advice of his crafty counsellor. He did it in order to be detested by David's friends and to alienate them more fully from him. This only makes vice the more abominable when it is used as the handmaid of policy. The saddest thing about the vice of our times is that it has become shameless, too. There are thousands of well-bred and well-educated young men who betray no blush of shame when exposed in the most disgusting orgies of licentiousness. There is a little passing talk, and a slight sensation in the channel of public opinion and a decent protest against it by a portion of the press, per-

haps a threatened suit at law, and then it all quietly passes over and the same men are received into society without a blush and claim the hands of pure and gentle girls who would be driven from every social circle if their names were even distantly suspected in similar connections. And yet there are men who. in the published literature of our times, are trying to excuse the license which is permeating our society as justifiable, and are telling us that God has endowed men with these passions and how can He blame them for acting accordingly to the nature He has given them. There is no doubt but that the greatest peril of young men today lies in the direction of social immorality and license. How can such young men be safe? The same law that follows the murderer to his doom will pursue the adulterer, not only to his grave, but to the horrors of an eternal retribution. There are great laws in the human soul which bring their own punishment. You may conceal from the public eye your wrong doing, you may hide your shame from man, but there is a phonograph which God has put within your breast which has recorded the story of your

crime, and will tell it over again, if not to other ears, to your conscience and memory forever. There is an hour and there is a place where white faces will look into yours and the cursing maledictions of ruined lives will be your tormentors, and you will need no bitterer hell than for God to send you away with the companions of your vices and say to you, "Son, remember." Sometimes these things overtake men in this life, and the iniquity of their heels compass them about until life becomes intolerable and society is the only door of escape from the horrors of an accusing conscience and a tormented life. Young men, be warned and beware. "Her house leads to the chambers of death and her ways take hold on hell."

IV. Absalom was a disobedient and disloyal son. He cared not for his father's love. No, he plotted against his very life as well as his throne. With cold and heartless indifference he schemed with his evil counsellors for the surest way to secure his life and to ignominiously destroy his kingdom. He was unnatural, ungrateful, unfilial and utterly unfaithful. How could such a young man be safe? God

has written the law of the fifth commandment in human nature, and the son or daughter that dishonors the parent will find themselves pursued to the end of life with a certain retribution. It is said that perhaps the reason that the Chinese nation today has outlived all others is that above all other people they honor parental relation. Be kind and gentle to your father and mother even if they are wrong and treat you wrongly. Meet them in the spirit of filial respect and tenderness. Of course there is a limit. We dare not let them control our conscience in the things of God, but even there you can do it so gently that your example will speak to them more loudly than your words, and God at last will give you the blessing of the fifth commandment, "Honor thy father and mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

V. Absalom was deceitful, false and treacherous. His course was one of deep artifice and studied duplicity. He secured his recall from banishment by the deepest cunning. When he returned he set himself by the arts of flattery to captivate the hearts of the people and to un-

dermine the influence of his father. He sat in the gates of Jerusalem meeting all that were in trouble, listening to their grievances and telling them how he would treat them if he was king until gradually their hearts went after him and he had laid the foundation for his rebellion. How could such a young man be safe? The deceiver sinning against the nature of things. Truth is just reality, just a law of God's order, and the man who sins against it sins against the very law of nature. It must react against him with profound rebound and destroy him. Truth is essential to morality, and falsehood in every form must end in disappointment, exposure and defeat. Young man, be true. It is not necessary that commercial business should be based upon a tissue of falsehood and misrepresentation.

Finally, Absalom was unscrupulous, unprincipled and ungodly, and in his own character lay the secret of his ruin. And so, on the other hand, the secret of character is godliness. It is by natural endowments that we can be true and pure. It is only by union with God through the Lord Jesus Christ and by receiv-

ing into our hearts that blessed Man who is pre-eminently the pattern for young men and the ideal life for them to live, not only as He once lived and walked before us as our pattern, but He comes to live again in every true heart that will receive Him, and to lift us up to His own ideal of holy, eternal manhood. Jesus Christ is forever a young man, and He wants to lead young manhood up to the high place where He has risen, our Leader and Head. Oh, let us receive and follow Him!

The contrasted picture of our text presents not only the folly and failure of Absalom, but the beautiful example of David's life. It is the love of the Father's heart who gladly would have died for his ruined son. It is also the picture of a more loving heart, even that heavenly Friend, who not only would have died for us, but has died for every man who will accept His blessed sacrifice. He is pleading with you, young man, and saying, Why should you die? Why should you be lost? Even if you have sinned and grieved Him and ruined yourself like Absalom, I have died for thee, and I will teach thee how to live and lift thee up from

that self-inflicted misery and make thee to be even as I. Oh, receive Him, and never let Him have to weep over you in heaven as He once wept over Jerusalem, saying, I would but ye would not. Never let Him have to say for thee, my brother, "Oh, Absalom, my son, my son, why have you let me die for you in vain?"

"Is the young man, Absalom, safe?" Brother, send back the nswer, as you close this page, "Yes; he is safe because he is saved through a Saviour's dying love."

THE IDEAL KING.

"He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow. But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands; but the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place." II. Sam. xxiii. 3-7.

THESE are the last words of David, the backward look at the story of a life. How different life looks in the retrospect and prospect. How the exaggerating hazes and the rose tints disappear in the clear, cold light of life's sterner reality and we see things a little as we shall see them when we look back upon the record from the heights of judgment and in the light of eternity. David had no exaggerated estimate of his own life. Whatever his failures may have been he seems to have

seen them in their true light and significance. and yet he had that God-given faith, which could look over his own failures to the bright and blessed hope of that greater King, of whom he was but the type and the distant foreshadowing. And so, that while in one sense it is true that this passage is the discouraging review of an imperfect reign, on the other hand it is just as true that it is the King, who would fulfill more perfectly the ideal that David saw and in whose coming glory David could forget the faults of his imperfect reign and even the sins of his oft-erring life.

I. DAVID'S IDEAL OF A TRUE KING.

David at least has learned this much of what a king ought to be and he wisely describes the picture of an ideal ruler.

1. He should be just, free and right in all his relationships with his fellowmen and with his subjects.

2. He should be godly, "ruling in the fear of God." He should recognize himself as the representative of the Divine King and work in

all things under His direction and in His stead. This is the only true impulse of righteousness. It must spring out of heaven and be inspired by the fear and love of God.

3. Beneficence. What a beautiful picture of a reign of peace, prosperity and blessedness! As the light of the morning, the rising sun, a cloudless sky and the light and warmth of the heavenly sunshine, the more bright and beautiful because it comes after the storm as the "clear shining after rain;" while on the disappearing clouds the rainbow spans the heavens and every leaf and flower is flashing like crystal jewels from the myriad drops in their reflected light.

II. DAVID'S FAILURE TO FILL THIS IDEAL.

"Although my house be not so with God." This little sentence tells us how honestly he realizes his failure to measure up to his own conception of what a king should be. He was the best of Israel's kings and all through the coming generations "his father, David," is held up to each of his successors as a model of a true reign. And yet he felt how far short he had

come of God's highest purpose for His theocratic people. His life was overshadowed by many an infirmity, sin and bitter sorrow.

If David was a failure what an awful failure human government must be considered. How fearfully the kings of earth have failed to represent the beneficent government of the heavenly reign. What were the long dynasties of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome, but menageries of wild beasts, whom Daniel well might represent in his prophetic vision as ferocious beasts devouring and destroying in their fierce career of selfishness and violence. How little better the governments of today may be witnessed by the testimony of our own times in the ferocious cruelties of two great nations, Turkey and Spain, which for two years have stood before humanity with gory hands and shameless impunity in their outrages and deeds of crime, and yet more humbling spectacle of the powers of Europe and America utterly helpless to restrain and just succeeding in keeping themselves from being scratched in the melee or allowing any of their number to get a larger share of the spoils.

What else may we look for to take the place of earthly despotisms? How much better is a republic. Look at France with its hideous revolution, and its present unscrupulousness and license. Look at the United States with the fearful subterranean forces of anarchy, passion and social strife threatening the disruption of society. Look at the states of South America in the incessant and successive contests of rival parties for political supremacy.

Shall we enthrone money, as king? Alas, the money kings of earth today are monopolizing the world's wealth, and the masses and the classes are getting ready for a relentless war of which we constantly hear the mutterings and there is no despotism so heartless and cruel as that of avarice and gold.

Or shall we enthrone culture and crown her with the sceptre of government? Alas, the golden age of art and literature is often the bituminous age of vice and license as gross as the days of the Borgias in Italy, or the Caesars in Rome and Pompeii. Culture without Christianity only gives people greater power for

wickedness. Our criminals today are no longer the unlettered classes but the graduates of universities. Our teachers of irreligion and vice, the men that would legalize suicide, prostitution and intemperance and burn up the Bible, are among the most brilliant wits, poets and orators of our time. No, earth needs a stronger, holier king, and she must go from worse to worse until He shall "overturn and overturn and overturn," and at last shall "come whose right is is." And He shall "deliver the poor and needy when he crieth and break in pieces the oppressor. In His days shall the righteous flourish and abundance of peace as long as the moon endureth."

David looked forward from his failures and the failures which he foresaw in prophetic vision in the lives of his successors and, in the distant future he beheld a King who "should reign in righteousness," and a Man who should be "as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

1. He was true to David's ideal.

He is just, and ruling in the fear of God, and all the exquisite imagery of this beautiful picture is fulfilled in Him. He is as the light of the morning. He is the Author of truth and light. He brings morning to the dark world. It is a morning without clouds. Its sun shall no more go down. He shall be to us an everlasting light. And yet it is a light and sunrise that follow the night of darkness and sorrow. It is the "clear shining after rain," and it is all the clearer and brighter because of the rain that went before.

Oh, how sweet it is to have Him enter our hearts and bring the peace of His benignant sway after the long night of our despair, "the clear shining after rain!" Oh, how sweet it will be some day to receive back from the grave our lost ones and to have Him bring light out of our darkness, joy out of our sorrow and crowns out of our crosses! And heaven will be all the sweeter and the brighter because of the grave and the gloom from which we have emerged, even as the "clear shining after rain." Oh, how beautiful it will be for earth to awake to her millenial morning after the night of the

tempest which will precede it and the Armageddon battle which will be just before.

His coming will be as the morning after the midnight and the "clear shining after the rain."

The figure also speaks of fruitfulness, "the tender grass springing out of the earth." Oh, the fruits His kingdom brings to us out of trial, the fir tree that comes instead of the thorn, the myrtle that grows out of the brier, the curse turned into a blessing, the "peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised" by the chastening of our God.

2. This coming King is the antitype of David.

David was His type and He fulfills many characteristics of Israel's first true king. David was born in Bethlehem. So was He. David was despised and rejected of men. So was He. David was anointed of the Lord. So is He, the anointed One. David was persecuted and pursued by his enemies, and for years a king in exile. So He was persecuted and murdered by hostile men, and even today He is still an exile King waiting for His throne. David was surrounded by a multitude of wretched, out-

cast and sinful men, attracted to him by the tie of common misery, but true to him in their sorrow and afterwards honored by him as the princes of his realm. So Jesus today is gathering His princes from the ranks of sinners and outcasts and some day they will be the nobility of heaven, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and sitting by His side upon His millennial throne. Then David came to his kingdom in sections, first Hebron and then at Jerusalem over all Israel. And so our coming King is first to be crowned by the little flock He shall bring with Him, and then He is to sit down upon the throne of all the world and reign from pole to pole and shore to shore.

3. He was David's Saviour.

"This," he says, "is my salvation." David understood that his Seed and his Offspring was to be His Redeemer, and from the sins of a lifetime he found peace and hope in trusting in the coming Deliverer and accepting Him as his personal Saviour.

4. David had entered into a covenant with the coming King.

"He hath made with me an everlasting cove-

nant, ordered in all things and sure." He had got the ear of his successor and had secured in advance his place and his inheritance in the coming Kingdom. It was a personal covenant. His own name was written there and all his rights and hopes secured beyond the possibility of disappointment or failure, "in all things well ordered and sure."

Beloved, have we this covenant made and secured with the coming King? Have we had an audience with Him in the days of His retirement and settled all the questions of our future in advance? There is a day coming when myriads of angels will surround His throne and it will not be possible to reach His presence and bring your request to His feet, but you shall go to your "own place" and reap the results of your earthly life.

Before the installment of our President his friends visited him in his retirement and their various requests were presented at leisure in his presence. It would be no easy task now to press through the formalities of even his modest court and claim his costly leisure for any personal need. This is the time to secure our

covenant with our King. Let us make speed to do it. Let us not rest until our names are written down upon His hands and His heart and upon the seat prepared for us, and the high calling and an immortal service to which He bids us aspire.

5. David's whole heart was in the coming King and kingdom.

"This," he says, "is all my salvation and all my desire." He had invested his being there, and all his hopes were passing upward and onward to the age to come. Life for him was over now. Its praises and its penalties were past. Alas, for him if this were all. But no, his fortune was laid up on high, his inheritance was insured beyond the grave and all his being was reaching forward to that glorious day when his illustrious Son should sit upon His greater throne and he should lay his crown at His feet and hail Him as the Root and Offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star.

Beloved, is our heart in the hope of Christ's return? Are our affections clustered there? Are our ambitions in the skies? Are our investments, our plans, our pursuits all tending

to that imminent event? David looked forward to it but knew it was far in the distance. Daniel went to his grave with the words "go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." We are living on the very threshold of its dawn. Oh, how much more it should mean to us! How we should watch and pray, and work, bending every energy, concentrating every plan and making all our lives subsidiary to this one great and supreme aim, to hasten the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

David knew he had been an unfaithful and sinful man. He could honestly say, "although my house be not so with God yet hath He made with me an everlasting covenant." He had accepted the infinite mercy and saving grace of Jesus Christ. He had come as a sinner without merit or claim and he had generously accepted all that God's mercy had so freely to bestow. Oh, there may be some of us today who can say "though my house be not so with God" my life has been a failure, my work has been disastrous, I am all wrong and I have nothing

to bring but shame; beloved, come all the same. It is the door of mercy that you are entering. If you deserve it you could only take an angel's place, but because you do not deserve it you can take, through the infinite grace of God and the gift of Jesus Christ, a place as high as that of Jesus Himself. Come although you have to come, saying,

"The mistakes of my life have been many,
The sins of my life have been more,
And I scarce can see for weeping,
But I'll knock at the open door.

"My mistakes His free grace will cover,
My sins He will wash away,
And the feet that tremble and falter
Shall walk through the gates of day."

On the other hand, how dark the picture of the wicked of which the scene closes! "The sons of Belial shall be to them as thorns thrust away because they cannot be taken with hands and they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place." Live for the world if you will, pursue its ambitions if you choose, be a thorn and bramble if you prefer, but there is a law of spiritual gravitation that leads all at last to their "own place," and if you belong to another

world thither shall you tend. The thorns are for flames and are useless for anything else. The soul born of God mounts to God and can be kept nowhere else. It is the law of the fitness of things, it is the law of nature, it is the law of eternity. "He that is holy let him be holy still. He that is righteous let him be righteous still. He that is unrighteous let him be unrighteous still. He that is filthy let him be filthy still. And, behold, I come quickly and my reward is with Me to give to every man as his work shall be."

Even so come, Lord Jesus come. Amen.

SHIMEI'S CURSE.

"Behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera; he came forth and cursed still as he came. Then said Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, unto the king. Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head. And the king said, What have I done with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, wherefore hast thou done so? And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold my son, which came forth from my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day." II. Sam. xvi. 5, 9, 10, 11 and 12.

THERE are flowers that bloom only in the glaciers of the Alps and the wild sirocco of the Sahara desert. And so there are virtues and graces that only appear in the wintry atmosphere of obloquy, calamity and sorrow. No man can be sure that he knows himself or is proved and tried until he has passed through the experience of cruel misunderstanding and

shameful wrong. The Son of Man was made perfect through sufferings, and in the perfecting of the Christian character patience is the last of the graces. Even charity, the queen of all graces, reaches her maturity in the school of sorrow. The first feature in her portrait is, she "suffereth long," and the last, she "endureth all things."

And so we see the highest qualities of David in the hour of his keenest trials and in the face of the most humiliating experiences. It is one thing to bear the cool treachery of such a son as Absalom. It is another thing, and in some respects a little harder, to endure the taunts and scoffs of a creature like Shimei. There is a sense in which the bite of a sandfly is more annoying than the artillery of a batallion. And so the present subject speaks to our own life in a place which many have found to be intensely irritating and often intensely hard.

I. THE CURSE OF THE WICKED.

1. Primarily it is the curse of the devil.

This is his peculiar business. His very name means "accuser." It is natural for him to

throw stones, hurl epithets and utter curses. This alone should arm us against his bows. When we know they come from him we need not greatly mind them as they are almost certain to be found unjust and in the end harmless. The spirit of fault-finding, sarcasm, criticism and calumny are all satanic, and every one who indulges in them is voluntarily wearing the devil's livery.

2. But the devil has some human voices to repeat his curses—the critic, the calumniator, the backbiter, the passionate and profane. These are all of the race of Shimei, and the business is not by any means wound up. No man or woman can pass through life without having to face the detractor and feel the keen wound of the slanderer.

3. It is a comfort to know as Solomon has so well expressed it, "The curse causeless shall not come." Unjust accusations and false calumniators can never harm us in the end.

4. The curse of the wicked almost always comes in the hour of our calamity. It made it doubly hard for David because Shimei took advantage of the darkest hour of his life. It was

mean and cowardly. If ever there was a time when common humanity would have looked in respectful silence upon so great a sorrow as his, it was the hour when his own child was seeking his father's life. But this was the time when the cowardly Shimei chose to strike his defenceless king, and add sharpness to the wound which was already stinging him to death.

5. It was made still harder by David's own sensitive conscience, and the sense of his own sin for which God was doubtlessly chastening him. At such a time it is so easy for the great adversary to inject into our hearts his most cruel poison, and to make our own errors seem darker and more malignant. It is a very dark hour in human life when, with circumstances arrayed against us and calamity overwhelming us with its angry billows on every side, our own heart turns against us, and the devil tries to make us seem worse than we are and to undermine even our confidence in the mercy of God and our very right to call Him our Father. At such a time the curse of the wicked seems to the sensitive and morbid conscience like the very voice of Divine judgment, and the great

accuser loves to play the part of a Divine messenger, and torture us with his reproaches and forebodings.

II. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH DAVID ENDURED THIS TRIAL.

1. He saw God in it above the devil and the devil's miserable instrument. "The Lord hath bidden him curse," he said, "let him curse." This is the highest ground that faith can take in the most trying hour. This was the way Joseph was able to look back over his distressing experience. "It was not you," he could say, "but the Lord who sent me before you to preserve life." When we can look over the devil's head and see our blessed Master ruling and overruling we can endure anything that He may permit. God does allow the wicked to assail us and the devil to tempt us. Sometimes it is to make manifest their wickedness and allow them to fill their cup of judgment. Sometimes it is to glorify Christ by our example of patience and gentleness.

2. David overlooked the petty trial of Shimei's cursing in the light of the greater trial of Absalom's crime. "My own son," he said, "is

seeking my life, why should I be unduly tried by this trifling nettle that seeks to sting my hand?" Nearly all our troubles would become trifling and seem unworthy of our notice if we looked above them to the greater issues of life. At the very time that we are fretting over some petty wrong there is a graver issue pending that needs our whole attention—perhaps some child or friend in great temptation, danger or sin, perhaps some great peril threatening our life and work, perhaps some duty that we are neglecting in the pursuit of this miserable side issue, perhaps the very crown of our eternal future is being risked while we let the devil pre-occupy us about our reputation, our rights, or the punishment of some petty slanderer whom we might better leave to God. I have known a minister of the Gospel spend years of his life in hunting down petty adversaries and following up contemptible assaults upon his character while his work suffered continued distraction and finally destruction and he came out in the end as a man always comes out who goes in to fight all the dogs in the street. He may succeed in defeating the dogs but he will

bear away scratches to last him for a lifetime and find he has lost his time into the bargain.

That was wise advice that Abraham Lincoln gave to his son. "My boy," he said, "men tell you to be slow to quarrel, but when you do quarrel make your quarrel so strong that you will not need to quarrel again for your enemy will respect you for life. My boy, do not take their advice. My counsel is, never quarrel. Even if you succeed in your contest you make an enemy and you lose more than you gain." Let us be so pre-occupied with the great issues of life that we shall pass by all these trifling things and with a wide estimate of life's real values shut our eyes to the devil's side shows and treat him and his emissaries with that which he least can stand, silent contempt.

3. David refused to revenge himself. He would not allow Abishai to cut off Shimei's head as he easily might have done but he left his cause unvindicated and he committed his case to the hands of his faithful Creator as we are commanded likewise to do.

4. Better still, he even took Shimei's curses as the promise of blessings and said with deep

ingenuity and lofty faith, "It may be the Lord will requite me good for his cursing." That is a fine view to take of the devil's unkindness, to ask the Lord to enter a credit in our account and balance the books with a blessing for us in consideration of his curse.

God does requite His children for the devil's cruel blows. He gives them grace and strength through the trial and He makes up to them for every blow by His loving kindness and His faithful providences. A dear friend once remarked to me respecting a child of God who had met with a terrible affliction and borne it with heavenly patience, "It seemed to me that ever afterward her God was trying to make up to her by His goodness for the sorrow that she had borne."

And so God does make up to us now. "As one whom his mother comforeth so will I comfort you." And by and by we shall find in the revision yonder a chain of gold for every chain of iron Satan forged; a crown of glory for every curse, teardrops transformed into diamonds and thorns and thistles blooming as myrtles in the Paradise of God. So when the

devil rages, scolds, strikes and blasphemes let us calmly look up and say, "Lord, remember his wrong and give me judgment against mine adversary."

III. THE ISSUE OF SHIMEI'S CURSE AND DAVID'S TRUST.

1. David was vindicated. His trial at length passed away, the sunshine came again, the rebellion was suppressed, the king was restored and the millions of Israel came to pay their homage at his feet and Shimei found himself in the cold minority, an object of contempt and helplessness, obliged even to plead for his own worthless life.

2. Nay, more. The punishment that he so well deserved came at last upon him through his own folly and recklessness. David never lifted his hand to touch him, but when Solomon came to the throne he called him to account for his former wickedness, but gave him perfect immunity while he remained in his own house in Jerusalem. But Shimei broke his parole, disregarded his solemn covenant and one day on a trifling pretext left his home and returned to find himself condemned by his own

folly to the execution that had waited so long for his wicked old head. So if we leave our enemies in the hands of God they will bring upon themselves the judgment of that we would avert from them if we could. Could we only see the sorrow and ruin that await many of those who have often wronged and tried us we would weep with compassion and we would kneel at their feet and implore them to save themselves from retribution and ruin. There are laws of inexorable consequence by which the bitter word which we send forth against another, and the unjust act by which we strike an innocent head, after describing their parabolic course through our mingled lives, come back in the end and strike our own head with all the accumulated force they have gathered on their way. These things can afford to wait, but the issue is as certain as the eternal laws of God. "It shall be done to thee as thou hast done" is the principle that has been inscribed on every page of human history and stands emblazoned on the records of God's provinces and pillars of the judgment throne.

3. David also got his blessing as well as

Shimei his curse. The best of it was, not the deliverance of David from the calamities that Shimei prophesied, but the fact that this little chapter could be written with its beautiful story of meekness, Christliness and heavenly patience. It gave David an opportunity to be a truer type of Christ and to leave a portrait in the galleries of eternity for which it would have been worth while to live. This, after all, is the greatest meaning of life. Our situations come to us not so much that we may get out of them or get into them but that they may furnish occasions for our exemplifying the Christian spirit. Like the dummies in the shop windows that are there to hold the various wares and robes that are exposed for exhibition and sale, so we are called to show forth the excellencies of Christ before a careless world. Our various circumstances come to us in the providences of God as opportunity for us to exhibit the life of our Master to a world that can only see Him through us. When circumstances smile upon us we are to exhibit the spirit of humble gratitude and unselfish joy. When sorrow comes we are to show a spirit of patience

and trust. When others revile and wrong us we are to exhibit the character which David displayed under the circumstances of our text. Everything is to be looked upon as an occasion for testimony and service for our Master. "It shall turn to you for a testimony" was the Master's intimation to His disciples as they went forth to witness for Him and to be imprisoned and persecuted by their fellowmen. He did not say, "You shall be delivered, you shall be protected," but He said rather, "You shall find the prison a pulpit and the judgment hall an auditorium where you can preach My Gospel and set forth My character before sinful men."

Thus we are making our eternal records and by and by we shall find that God has kept the record correctly and completely, and that while we have been endeavoring to represent Him He has been standing for us weaving our sorrows into chaplets and crowns of eternal recompense.

The little pearl oyster receiving accidentally into its shell a rough fragment of rock or sand tries in vain to expel the intruding and irritant

substance and only suffers in the struggle until rasped and bleeding it gives up in agony and helplessness. Then a new force comes into play. From its peculiar physiological system the little mollusk sends forth a crystal fluid which covers and coats the rough piece of rock with a soft crystalline cushion and as this grows and hardens it becomes a beautiful pearl. It ceases to irritate and soothes and rests the wounded side of the little creature until the curse has become a blessing, and some days later the pearl fisher discovers the hidden treasure, opens the shell and takes forth a gem of purest lustre and boundless value which is worn in the coronets of kings and adorns the highest rank and grandest occasions. So some day our sorrows, irritations and wrongs, having first been sweetened by the Holy Spirit into heavenly virtues will become the jewels of an immortal crown and will shine in the diadem of Jesus and adorn our brow forever.

Beloved, don't let us be turned aside by sandflies, barking dogs and biting thorns from the glorious possibilities of a life of sweetness, righteousness and victory, and a crown of glory.

THE LAW OF SACRIFICE.

"Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen. And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the Lord was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel." II. Samuel xxiv. 24, 25.

THREE great thoughts are vividly presented and illustrated in the story of this chapter.

I. SIN.

We have an account of the last great sin of David's life. It was quite different from his former transgression and represented more subtle elements of temptation and disobedience. In the account given in the parallel passage in First Chronicles it is represented as a masterpiece of Satanic subtlety. It was the devil who suggested and instigated it that he might lead David to provoke God and bring upon himself and his kingdom Divine judgment.

It was a sin which to the ordinary mind

might seem comparatively trifling or, at least, difficult to weigh in the same balance with the foul crime committed against Uriah. And yet it provoked God's severer judgment. It was the simple act of numbering the people, taking a census of the whole population of his kingdom, especially of the men able to bear arms.

The peculiar element of sin in this act was the spirit of vain glory and self-conscious pride which prompted it. It was really the treacherous departure on David's part from his humble and supreme reliance on Jehovah as the theocratic King and supreme sovereign and support of the Hebrew monarchy, and a turning to the arm of flesh as well as the spirit of self-complacent pride in his own greatness and glory. It was the same spirit which afterwards manifested itself in the proud boast of Nebuchadnezzar: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the honor of my majesty?" and which brought upon him the swift and terrible blow that sent him for seven years to grovel in insanity among the beasts of the field.

This is one of the gilded sins of human nature whose enormity escapes the self-conceited

thought of human ambition and pride. But it is the source of all sin and the very cause of Satan's downfall. Pride is "the snare of the devil" and it seems the idea of Holy Scripture as well as of the highest human genius, that when Satan looked into the mirror and saw his own beauty and brightness he became intoxicated with unholy ambition and pride, and, assuming the place of a god he sank from the heights of heaven to the depths of hell, and has ever since been dragging down all the spirits that he could control by the same subtle temptation.

This was the eventual result which he made upon the innocency of Eve when he appealed to her spiritual pride and said, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Ever since that eventful morning her sons and daughters have been infected with a spirit of a false ambition and a delusive vainglory which has strewn the world with wrecks of ambition, vanity and pride.

This was the subtle snare which Satan prepared for David's latest days. It was the unconscious desire to display the greatness of his

kingdom and the strength of his military resources.

Joab, his shrewd commander-in-chief, while a man of no moral or religious principle whatever, was wise enough to know that David's proposal was wrong, and he earnestly tried to dissuade him from it without success, and then reluctantly proceeded to carry out his master's instructions. The census proceeded for nearly ten months including the whole kingdom except the tribes of Levi and Benjamin and showed an available military force of more than a million and a quarter men.

But the moment the result was announced to David he felt in his inmost soul that he had erred and sinned; and with that deep intuition of a true and tender conscience which was so beautiful a feature of his character when he really saw his fault he humbled himself before God and said, "Oh, Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done. Now, I beseech Thee, Oh, Lord, take away the iniquity of Thy servant, for I have done very foolishly." God was pleased to accept his penitence. But nevertheless He proceeded to teach him the important

lesson rightly imparted to him and to the ages for whom he was living as a great object lesson. Happy for us if we could learn that lesson without having to go through the same sad discipline!

This sin of vanity, self-consciousness and pride is one of the most alarming signs of our public, social and religious life of today. We see it in the proud despots of great nations. We see it in the spirit of brag both in our own and in other lands. We see it in the disgusting and extravagant social display so characteristic of our time. We see it in ecclesiastical and religious ambition. And its subtle snare attends every stage of our religious experience and makes it so easy to seem rather than to do and to turn even our holiest blessings into a dramatic exhibition or a self-conscious display of our own graces or victories or Christian work.

Whenever we become occupied unduly with even the best religious experience, or think or speak in the spirit of pride of the most useful Christian work, we at once obscure it with its own shadow and defile it with the foul odor of carnal pride. Lowliness, whether it be phy-

sical, intellectual or spiritual, loses all its charm when it becomes conscious of its own attraction, and modesty in a heavenly veil which covers with Divine beauty even the homeliest face and the simplest action. Let us take care as we come near the holiest to veil our faces with our wings and to be so absorbed with God that we shall not know that our faces shine. Let us never forget, as He blesses our work, to hide both it and ourselves under the shadow of His hand, and laying every crown at His blessed feet to say, "Not unto us, Oh Lord, not unto us; but unto Thy name be all the glory."

David's great sin was marked by God with the severest chastening. It was chastening mingled with mercy because David had already seen his fault and knew that God was dealing with him not in judgment but in paternal discipline. It is very sweet to recognize our Father's hand in our sorest trials. It would be terrible to find ourselves in the hands of an angry God. God's disciplinary dealings with His children are always merciful and the tenderest proof of the Father's love. "You only have I known," He says, "of all the in-

habitants of the earth, therefore will I chasten you for your iniquity."

We see, in the manner in which David received God's dealings with his sin, a beautiful example of penitence and submission of a believing soul. God gave David his choice of three judgments, either of a destructive famine or defeat in war, or three days of pestilence. David's answer is very instructive. "Let me fall," he says, "into the hands of the Lord and let me not fall into the hands of man." Here lies the difference between the natural heart and the erring child of God. The former wants to get away from God, and the latter wants to fall into His hands and be dealt with by His wisdom and mercy. Here Peter and Judas part. The latter went out from the presence of Christ driven to despair by his conscience. The former lingered to catch his Master's look, and was the first to swim to the Galilean shore when Jesus met His disciples after His resurrection.

The hardest part of David's chastening was the suffering it brought upon others, the innocent "sheep," as he called them, who had done

no wrong, and yet who suffered the most terrible effects from his transgression. There is no form of trial so severe as that which comes to our innocent and loved ones in consequence of our own disobedience to God. Many a parent whose heart would not be reached by a personal affliction is often broken into penitence and humility by the dying anguish of a beloved child who acts as a messenger of discipline to that parent's heart.

"Smitten friends,
Are angels sent on errands full of love.
For us they languish and for us they die.
And shall they languish, shall they want in vain?
Shall we tread under foot their agonizing groans,
Frustrate their anguish and make void their death?"

You may say, if you like, that this is unjust on God's part, but its reason lies in the very nature of things. As well might you say that it was unjust for the branch to wither when the root of the tree is cut. God has interwoven us all together so that one involves many in mutual suffering. A father's intemperance bequeaths a curse upon his innocent babes. A pastor's fall wrecks the eternal hopes of many who leaned upon his faith and are undermined

by his unfaithfulness. Every one of us carries with us the fate of precious souls as surely as the captain carries the lives of his passengers in his hand. David found this out when he saw seventy thousand of Israel's innocent men, women and children lying black with plague and convulsed with agony because of his rash, presumptuous act.

Oh, is God thus dealing with you through another's sorrow? God forbid that your hearts should be so hard as to "let them languish, let them die in vain." Listen to the voice that speaks to you from their pallid brow and expiring breath, and turn to God whose hands have smitten and He will again make you whole. David's heart was crushed by this terrible calamity, and at last unable to endure it longer he cried out in a truly magnanimous spirit as the angel lifted his sword above Jerusalem to destroy it, "Lord, I have sinned and done wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done? Let Thine hand I pray Thee be against me and against my father's house."

II. ATONEMENT AND EXPIATION.

But David's self-sacrifice could not atone

for his great sin. He and his father's house, had they all perished, could not have made right the wrong which he had done.

And so God taught him and taught the world through him that greatest lesson of Divine revelation which had been enacted so often on the Jewish altars, and which was yet to be accomplished in its reality by the world's Redeemer, that nothing less than the blood of God's own appointed sacrifice could expiate the sins of men. And so the command was given, "Go up, rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. And David built there an altar unto the Lord and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the Lord was entreated for the land and the plague was stayed from Israel."

Here, on the very site where Abraham offered up his Isaac ages before as the type of the world's greater sacrifice, and near where Jesus afterwards died, David reared by Divine command a sacrificial altar and offered up victims which were but figures of the Lamb of God who, in later ages, laid down His own life for the sins of men, and thus laid the foundation

by which God can be just and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. This is the greatest truth of Divine revelation, and this was the highest lesson which David could learn or teach.

But what his own grief and penitence and sorrow and even his very death could not have done, the blessed Substitute whom God had for ages been preparing was at last to accomplish and thus make an end of sin and bring in everlasting righteousness through His atoning sacrifice and His precious blood. This is the supreme truth which the folly of the world's wisdom is setting aside, and making the blood of the covenant a common thing. But this is the only foundation for the sinner's hope and the loftiest themes of the songs of ransomed souls on earth and in the heavens. "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever." Never can this story grow old as long as the human conscience needs that precious blood to efface its sense of sin and dread of judgment.

Every little while we see some illustration

of the deep conviction in the human heart that blood must go for blood, and that the man who has outraged, wronged and murdered human virtue and innocence must receive in kind the wrong that he has done. Back of this lies a true instinct that is part of the nature of things, that sin must be expiated, and that the sin which has had grosser aggravations needs a corresponding satisfaction. Talking lately with one that had greatly sinned, the remark was made, "How can I expect to be so easily forgiven because my fault was so aggravated and shameful?" As I looked up for an answer God gave me such a view of the judgment hall and the cross as I had never seen, and I answered, "Jesus Christ not only suffered death for sinners, but He suffered all the shame and horror, all the insult and ignominy and aggravated sufferings which every form of sin could deserve. He was insulted, abused, outraged and degraded before brutal men because He was standing for those that had outraged, insulted and fiendishly wronged the innocent and helpless, so that these vilest sinners might look back to His sufferings and see in

them a substitution for what they deserved." And so Christ is a qualified and complete Saviour for every sort and degree of sins.

This was the vision which God no doubt gave David in that day, and through which David found peace for his great transgression, and had a dying vision of Calvary and Christ such as he had left on record in some of his Messianic Psalms, where we can behold the dying agony and hear the cries of the Lamb of God as distinctly as if we ourselves were standing under the very shadow of His cross. Oh, beloved, have you had that vision? Has it lifted your burden, quenched your guilt, healed your conscience and given eternal peace and eternal gratitude to your redeemed soul?

III. SELF-SACRIFICE.

But the sacrifice of Calvary demands from us another sacrifice, not by way of expiation, but by way of grateful love. What right have we to take that precious life as our substitute unless we are willing to give our consecrated lives in loving return, and therefore that sacrificial scene on Mount Moriah has a companion

picture in the spirit of self-sacrifice which we see exemplified there, both in Araunah, the princely Jebusite, and in David. As David came to buy the site for the altar, Araunah with princely liberality offered to give both the site and all the accompaniments, oxen, ploughs, implements and everything. "Here be the oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments, and other instruments of the oxen for wood. All these things did Araunah as a king give unto a king." He met the occasion with kingly nobility of spirit, and God paused a moment to pay tribute in the narrative to his nobleness of character.

But David was not to be outdone by Araunah. "Nay," he replied, "but I will surely buy it of thee at a price." There was no petty bickering to get the best of the bargain, but the two men were contending who would be the noblest, and David insisted on giving him his price, uttering as he did this epigram of sacrifice and service, "I will not offer unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing." This is always the spirit produced by a true vision of Calvary. "We thus judge,"

says the Apostle, "that if One died for all then all died, and He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him that died for them and rose again." The blood of Calvary is fruitful seed in the consecrated hearts and lives and reproduces itself in a similar spirit of self-renunciation.

This was really why God chose this spot for David's sacrifice. It was dear to Him because it had been the scene of an earlier sacrifice, where Abraham, as the type of God the Father, gave up his only son in willing sacrifice representing the greater sacrifice of Calvary.

These are things that will live and shine when earth's palaces and thrones have passed away. This is the light of heaven, the light of Calvary, the light of Christian life, the light of the coming judgment when the brightest rewards will be given, not so much for what was done as for what was sacrificed.

Beloved, are you giving God that which costs you nothing? Is there real blood in your consecration? Have you ever shed a tear for Christ, or let go a pleasure that some soul

might be saved or some cause might be helped for His dear sake?

God lets these opportunities come to us in life to give us a chance of being like Christ, to help us to crucify our natural life and to lift us into His own likeness. If you have not yet learned this law of sacrifice it is because you have not yet gone out of self into Christ. It is one thing to have the blood of Christ on us. It is another to have the heart of Christ in us. The spirit of sacrifice is too hard for the human heart. It is possible only for Him who has already died for us, and is willing to live in us and teach us how to die with Him and live for Him. The blood of Christ upon your soul will save you from wrath and admit you to heaven; but unless you learn the law of sacrifice, and know Him in this deeper death and life through His own indwelling, you never can join the inner circle of His crowned ones, or know the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings and the resurrection from among the dead.

GOD'S COMPENSATIONS.

"As for me I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building. But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for My name, because thou hast been a man of war and hast shed blood. And he said unto me, Solomon, thy son, he shall build My house and My courts; for I have chosen him to be my son and I will be his Father." I. Chron. xxviii. 2, 3 and 6, compared with II. Samuel vii. 1-29.

THERE could be no stronger evidence of David's perfect loyalty to Jehovah as the theocratic king of Israel and of his true conception of the fact that he was but the representative of a Divine sovereignty than the fact that as soon as he was established upon his throne his very first thought was to prepare for the removal of the ark to Jerusalem, and a little later for the erection of a splendid house for this sacred memorial of Jehovah's presence and covenant. Feeling quite ashamed of his own palatial residence while the ark of God remained under the shelter of curtain and tent poles, he

sent for Nathan, the prophet, and announced to him his high purpose to build a temple for Jehovah, a house for the ark of the covenant.

Nathan's first impulse was to encourage the king in his lofty intention, and he quickly answered without having consulted God, "Do all that is in thine heart, for the Lord is with thee." But a little later, when he had time to listen to Jehovah's counsel, the message was entirely changed and he was sent to David with instructions to say to him that he could not be permitted to build the temple which he had proposed, because his reign had been one of conflict and bloodshed. God accepted the will for the deed and announced to him that his favorite son, Solomon, whose name and reign were to be significant of peace, should be chosen for this high service and that God would give to David in compensation for the rejection for his proffered service, a covenant of blessing for the ages to come and would build him a house and make him the ancestor of a greater Son, who should inherit his throne and become at once his offspring and his Lord. At the same time David was to be permitted to co-

operate in this great enterprise and work with all his heart to provide the means and resources for its successful accomplishment afterwards by Solomon, his son.

All this is finely illustrative of several important principles in God's dealings with His people and several striking features in the character of David, and the whole incident is fraught with most important and spiritual lessons for us in our Christian life and service.

I. A HIGH AND HOLY PURPOSE.

"See now," exclaims David, "I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains." How much this reveals of the deepest heart of the man of God.

How natural it is for us to think of our own houses and dwell either upon their lack or upon their luxury, but David felt quite ashamed to be so comfortably situated while the cause of his Lord seemed exposed to humiliation and reproach, and he longed to do something for the honor of God and for the extension of His kingdom.

God did not lay this upon David by an ex-

press command. He loves to have us think about His cause and plan for His glory and honor. How often do we think as David did? What proportion do our personal and family expenses bear to our sacrifices to the cause of our Redeemer? Could we but realize as we sit surrounded by comforts and luxuries the condition of the famishing millions for whom Christ poured out His richest blood and for whom our affluence and extravagance would purchase eternal salvation! How much ought we realize the injustice and selfishness of our conduct and the light in which some day we will look upon our misspent lives. What must heaven think of the spectacle of this one city in a Christian land spending more in a single summer for pleasure yachts than all the missionary societies in the world will spent in two years to evangelize the heathen!

The surplus and waste which professing Christians are expending in absolutely needless indulgence, in extra buttons on their gloves, extra furniture in their homes, extra splendor in their equipage, extra houses for their residence in town and country, extra dec-

orations on their churches, extra music in their choirs, these useless, wasteful things alone would be sufficient, if given to God, to evangelize the entire world in a decade of years.

This single question which David asked himself if pressed home to a hundred thousand consciences in Christian America would revolutionize our social life and our aggressive work for the salvation of men. It was the same question that Haggai asked the people of a later age, "Is it time for you, oh, ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses and this house lie waste? Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of Hosts, consider your ways. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little and when ye brought it home I did blow upon it"—or, I blew it away (margin)—"because of Mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house."

May not this be as truly said today as in the days of Haggai because of our financial panics and commercial depression, but when God does bless His people they spend it for themselves and care not for His suffering cause and the trust which He has committed to their

hands to give the Gospel to all mankind. Is God first in all our expenditures and all our thoughts? You may have many debts, but is your first debt always paid and are you careful to see that God gets His part no matter what else may fail? This is the test of loyalty and this is the secret of prosperity and blessing.

II. A KEEN DISAPPOINTMENT.

God declined David's proffered service. Lovingly and unreservedly was it offered, but God could not accept it and He sent His servant, Nathan, to say, "Thou shalt not build an house for Me to dwell in." He said it very tenderly and with many promises of blessing and assurances of appreciation, but David had to relinquish his purpose and give up the task on which he had set his loving heart.

And so God sometimes declines our service and refuses the gift which we have proffered. Perhaps you offered your life for missionary service and He has not opened your way. Perhaps you have laid your child upon the altar of the Lord and He has not accepted your gift. Perhaps you have thought of some great pro-

ject of beneficence or religion and God has held you back. Perhaps you planned some mighty work and threw all the strength of your being into it and God has not prospered it. Your plans have failed, your efforts have come to naught and you can see that it was not of God.

This is a very keen and painful experience, but it is an experience that is essential for the disciple of Christ to thoroughly learn. It is not enough that we are willing and anxious to work for God, but the work itself must be of God. It must be God's man, in God's way, at God's time and according to God's plan. This is one of the deepest deaths that Christians are often called to die. Indeed, our work is unacceptable to God and useless to ourselves and others until it first has been bathed in the blood of Calvary and touched with the sign of crucifixion. It must cease to be our work and thus become His and His alone. We must learn to acquiesce to God's refusals and to believe where we cannot see that He has something better for us than the work we chose. To do this without losing time and becoming discouraged

and morbid requires the very highest manifestation of the grace of God and the spirit of Christ. To learn to wait without fretting, without petulance, without haste, is the perfection of discipline and the best preparation for effectual work. The order of service is, first, tarry, then do.

III. A GRACIOUS COMPENSATION.

While God declined David's service He gave him the grandest compensation. "Thou shalt not build Me an house, but the Lord shall build thee an house." He turned the tables upon him effectually by saying you thought to do something for Me, but, instead, you must consent that I shall do something greater for thee. I am the Soverign of all worlds and the Lord of all resources. I need not your gifts, but I need those who can accept My gifts and receive My blessings in the magnanimous spirit in which I bestow.

And so God proceeded to give to David a series of covenant promises covering all the future and reaching down to the very throne of His glorious Seed—the great Messiah, who

was to be the Son of David, the King of Israel. The most critical examination of this prophetic chapter (II. Samuel vii.) leaves no doubt that while immediately it refers to Solomon yet ultimately it reaches forward to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. "He shall build an house for My Name and I shall establish the throne of His kingdom forever. I will be His Father and He shall be My Son." This cannot refer to Solomon primarily because his kingdom was not established forever, but ended in failure. In Heb. i. 5 it is directly quoted as a Messianic prophecy relating to the Lord Jesus Christ exclusively.

But how can the words in II. Sam. vii. 14 be consistently applied to Christ? "If he commit iniquity I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men; but My mercy shall not depart away from him." A critical study of this passage has furnished the answer and shown that it may be correctly translated, "if iniquity be imputed to Him," and we know that iniquity was imputed to the Lord Jesus Christ, for "He was made sin for us who knew no sin," and

when so imputed to Him He was "chastened with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men," for "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, and by His stripes we are healed." Still later in the chapter we reach even a higher point of Messianic fulfillment. In responding to this great promise of the Coming One, David answers, "Who am I, O Lord, and what is my house that Thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord God, that Thou hast also spoken of Thy servant's house for a great while to come and of a Man of great estate," as the last clause of this verse may be more correctly interpreted. This Man of great estate of whom God had spoken was no other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so we see for our comfort and instruction that when God refuses our proffered service or our earnest prayer He has for us a compensation as precious as that He gave to David.

In the first place it is a compensation through Christ. It is something in Him which He gives us. It is some deeper revelation, some fuller experience of His grace and love, which is worth

all that we could ask or the world could give. Did He keep you back from some cherished plan or take from you some treasure of your affection? Beloved, it was that He might give you Jesus through it in some deeper way, and make up to you with heavenly solace for the loss of earthly blessing.

Then, as in David's case, He gives you something "for a great while to come." He may refuse you some present gratification, but He lays up in store for you some eternal heritage of glory. Oh, if we could extend our vision and take in the far perspective we might be laying up every day some "treasure in the heavens which faileth not," and, out of life's disappointments we might be forging eternal gains. Do men wrong us? Let us look up and say, Lord, lay up for me some word of commendation at the throne. Do earthly fortunes fail us? Let us by the wand of faith transform the curse into a blessing, and take instead the mansions and the thrones which He has promised us by and by.

Sometimes I have seen His children fail to receive even their believing prayers just now,

but I have felt that God had answered these very prayers in some substantial form which was to meet them on the other side.

God's bonds are long-time ones and they all accumulate compound interest, and when the day of maturity comes we shall weep with wonder to see the meaning of His hundredfold.

IV. A WISE SUBSTITUTION.

While God refused the service that David proffered He appointed his son, Solomon, to perform the task. At the same time He gave a reason for this substitution which is deeply significant. He told David it was not fit for him to build the temple because his reign was associated with conflict and blood, and that the temple was a symbol of the condition of peace and triumph where the battle was already fought and the throne of peace established forever. The symbol of David's reign was the shifting tabernacle of the wilderness, suggestive of change, conflict and trial. The temple, however, was significant of that future age when Christ shall reign in His millennial glory, and sway the sceptre of a peaceful empire for a

thousand years. Now, Solomon was a true type of all this, and, therefore, it was his part to build that temple. This will explain why God often refuses to accept some of our services or to bless some of our plans. We are trying to build a temple here and accomplish a work which only belongs to the millennium.

When we set out to have a perfect church and an ideal society, when we expect to close all the saloons, convert all the heathen, put down all the wickedness and have some Utopia of perfect blessedness, we are anticipating the age, we are ahead of the times, we are trying to translate a season of conflict, sin and temptation, into a millennium that has not yet dawned, and God will not bless these plans. Many of us have tried them, and failed and come back to the realization that we are not building temples here or accomplishing any form of perfect work. We are simply quarrying stones out in the mountains, and hewing timbers for a building that will be erected by-and-by when Christ Himself shall come and rear a temple for the millennial age. Let us be content to work at the rough materials, to see our ambitions dis-

solve and fail, and look forward to the "great while to come," which David saw, when all our hopes will be fulfilled and we shall dwell in a "city that hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

There was another reason suggested for God's refusal of David's proffered service. He intimated that He did not care very much about temples anyhow, and had been perfectly content to wander through the wilderness in shifting tents. What God wants is not splendid architectural palaces, but living temples of holy hearts in which He can dwell and rule. I do not believe a song would cease in heaven if all the splendid Gothic cathedrals in the world would be shaken to pieces by an earthquake to-morrow. God would let them all go rather than have a single saint defile the living temple of the Holy Ghost.

V. A BEAUTIFUL ACQUIESCENCE AND CO-OPERATION IN GOD'S PLAN.

David not only acquiesced in the Divine message, but went to work with all his might to help to accomplish it, and labored as unselfishly

for the temple that Solomon should build as if he himself had been entrusted with the entire task. During the remaining years of his reign he collected the prodigious sum of three thousand millions of dollars in money and materials, and gave himself, of his own personal wealth, the magnificent contribution of over eighty millions of dollars for this work.

Nay, further, he devoted himself to prepare a service and ritual for the house of God that should be built with twenty-four corps of ministering priests, two hundred and eighty-eight leaders of song, a choir of four thousand voices, four thousand porters and twenty-four thousand Levites for the other offices of the service of the Lord. All this he left in perfect order for Solomon's administration, and he himself lent his splendid genius and inspired gift of poetry and music, leading sometimes the choral service with his own harp and voice with Divine enthusiasm.

Beloved, have we learned to take as much delight in God's work through the hand of another as when it bears the impress of our own personality? The only way to do this is by see-

ing no man in it, but recognizing it wholly as the work of God and remembering that the workers are His instruments subject to His authority, summoned and prepared at His sovereign will. No man is ready to say, "Here am I, Lord; send me," until he has first learned to say, "Lord, send by whom Thou wilt send."

Finally, let us learn from the spirit of David the spirit of large-heartedness and magnanimity in the work of God. What a splendid spectacle! A king and a whole kingdom laying themselves out with all their resources to honor God and build a monument for His glory may well put to shame our pretensions of being a loyal Christian nation or even an honest church of Christ, while we are putting our billions into the enterprises of commerce and the armaments of war, and our paltry pennies are deemed sufficient to supply the resources for the evangelization of the world and the bringing in of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, how small, how shameful, how unworthy the spirit of modern Christianity!

God forgive us and lift up some voice that can penetrate to the selfish ear of trade and strike

some blow that will shatter the coffers of religious selfishness and consecrate their treasures to build, not a temple of material masonry, but a house of spiritual stones of saved and sanctified men and women, a work which will fulfill the loving purpose for which He died, and give the knowledge of salvation to all the world that He Himself may come and build that greater temple of the new Jerusalem, of which Solomon's splendid edifice was only a transient type.

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